

Suggestion for a standardised Victim Personal Statement.

This is my Victim Personal Statement, the contents of which are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I wish it to be read to the court in the event of a conviction.

Theft of lead from the roof of a church may be thought by some to be a victimless crime; it is not. Each theft of church roof lead has numerous victims: myself as (the Incumbent), who has personal responsibility for the church to the Bishop; each Churchwarden and PCC member who has spent (over the course of many years) their valuable time and effort trying to fund and administer this church and to keep it open as a public witness of the Christian Faith; every member of the congregation, for whom this church is a sacred and time-honoured place of worship; and every member of the local community who treasures their (village) (neighbourhood) church as a place for the baptisms, weddings and burials of their loved ones and where they come to join regular church-goers at Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas-time.

The consequences for the Church of England of lead theft are dramatic. The vast majority of Anglican Churches in England insure with the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group – specialist insurers who offer favourable rates and tailor made policies to churches. There have been approximately 8000 metal theft claims made to the company for metal theft since 2007 and these claims have resulted in pay-outs totalling some £23million. Most of these claims have related to church roofs and as a consequence EIG will now only offer insurance to churches which have applied Smartwater marking to vulnerable surfaces and then only to a maximum of £5000 cover for lead and £5000 for ancillary damage (such as rain incursion after the covering is stolen). Furthermore, a church from which lead to the value of £5000 or more has been stolen in any one year **is not insured against further loss**. This applies until it is time to renew the policy because EIG will make no subsequent insurance payment to a claimant church during the balance of the insured period once the financial limits set out above have been reached. Churches like our own do what they can to protect themselves but buildings security and insurance are expensive and cannot be allowed to detract from our other core activities.

The consequences to this church are (serious) (severe) (catastrophic).

- Summarise the loss or damage (e.g. *lead was stripped from the whole of the north porch and 60% of the north aisle roof, resulting in flooding of the organ loft and vestry when rain fell later that night*)
- Relate any traumatic facts upon the person seeing or discovering the crime and upon any persons expecting the imminent use of the premises for pastoral offices (e.g. – *Mrs Larkin, a 75 year old parishioner, discovered the damage the next day and is in a state of shock – a couple who were to be married in church this weekend have now most reluctantly had to obtain a special licence to be married in a neighbouring church*)
- Estimate the cost of replacing the lead or explain why this is impossible in the time-scale concerned

- Estimate any cost of ancillary damage or explain why this is impossible in the time-scale concerned
- Set out the insurance position (e.g. *St Swithun's took the precaution of installing Smartwater and was fully insured at a cost of £1260 this year but as this claim will exceed £5000 parishioners will now have to raise several thousand pounds to replace this roof and will then be uninsured until next May*)
- Give a realistic and truthful view of the way in which this might impact upon the church (e.g. *for the last twenty years St Boniface has struggled to pay for the high cost of maintaining and running a Victorian building which does not attract grants from bodies such as English Heritage. In the light of the above there is now a very real risk that the church will have to close and the village will lose its focus of Christian witness*).
- Relate any additional impact upon yourself (e.g. *this crime has had a major impact upon my workload meaning that a substantial amount of my time has had to be diverted from pastoral duties such as visiting the sick and the bereaved. This comes as the culmination of a series of crimes committed against church property such that I have been greatly troubled by the whole episode and am seeking medical assistance for sleep loss and depression.*)

The church seeks compensation (in the following amount) (in the sum detailed in the schedule prepared after this statement was written) (in such amount as the court deems appropriate).

I am prepared to attend court and give evidence in support of this statement if required.

Signed

Rector/Vicar/Priest in Charge