

Latest News

Churches in Dorset subjected to 66 crimes

A Countryside Alliance investigation into lead theft and criminal activity reported by local churches of all UK denominations has found 66 reported crimes in Dorset since July 2019.

In neighbouring Devon and Cornwall, 212 total crimes were reported in the same time period, including 62 reported thefts and 80 cases of criminal damage.

Across the UK, 5831 crimes have been reported at churches and religious buildings, after 40 of 45 UK police forces responded to the Freedom of Information request.

The Countryside Alliance, which campaigns on rural issues, has compiled the data from across the country, into a report for its membership. This includes 946 cases of violence, 1750 of criminal damage and 2152 of thefts, of which 278 relate to lead and other metal theft.

Mo Metcalf-Fisher of the Countryside Alliance said:

"Taking into account that during some of this year, the country was in lockdown, it is chilling to learn that criminals either acting alone or in gangs have taken advantage of this awful pandemic and continued to target rural churches.

"Of course, people need to have open access to our religious sanctuaries, but the warnings from last year backed up by these latest figures, must be heeded if we are to seriously protect our places of worship.

"We need to ramp up access to a greater amount of funding from the protective security scheme and ensure the scheme remains available going forward. It will also require greater vigilance from the public, particularly in rural areas, where suspicious activity must be reported to police."

A spokesperson for our Diocese said:

"It is always sad and very disappointing when these important community venues are targeted by thieves. The Diocese of Salisbury works hard with all its parishes and the communities they serve, encouraging them to take precautions against theft such as roof alarms, CCTV and marking items with Smartwater. Churches are at the heart of every Dorset community and, before the Covid-19 pandemic, were encouraged to be open during daylight hours."