

Avoiding Metal Theft from Roofs with Alternatives to Copper and Lead



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We all love lead and copper roofs. The materials are so tactile, and the roofs look so beautiful. We also appreciate the historic importance of lead and copper roofs to our architectural heritage.

With the price of copper and lead heading through the roof it was only a matter of time before metal theft was going to start impacting on building owners again. Thieves steal copper from heating systems in vacant buildings, but they also target lead and copper roofs and flashings. Particularly vulnerable are empty or frequently vacant buildings, including churches, schools and crematoria.

One solution to metal theft from your roof is to increase security, but this can be prohibitively expensive. An alternative is to replace the lead and copper with different materials, both on existing buildings, and when designing new buildings where a similar appearance to metal roofing is required but the cost or risk of theft is too great.

Guildford Crematorium in Surrey has a beautiful copper roof which unfortunately became the target for metal thieves last year. The visitor area and walkway needed a more practical system and the borough architect approved the use of Rhepanol fk single ply roofing membrane with standing seams as a replacement.

A cost effective alternative to metal theft from buildings

Single ply membrane is a good alternative to copper or lead roofing because:

- Single ply membrane is made of polymers (in the case of Rhepanol fk, PIR) which have no scrap value;
- The membrane has a very similar aesthetic to lead;
- The aesthetic can be enhanced with standing seam profiles and rolls;
- Rhepanol can also be coloured using FDT's specialised decorative paint, to give a shiny copper or verdigris finish;
- As well as being much less liable to theft, a single ply roof is considerably cheaper to build than one in lead or copper.

A copper painted Rhepanol fk replacement roof finish was installed over the walkways and visitor area at Guildford Crematorium. Applied in two coats, the copper paint does not crack or peel and comes with the same life expectancy as the Rhepanol fk membrane. Made with real flakes of copper suspended in the same PIB used to make the membrane, as the liquid evaporates, a coating of copper is left behind which will gradually weather to a beautiful verdigris finish.

The borough architect was very happy with the replacement material, and has passed an order to have all the remaining roof area covered in the same way.

The reroofing work was carried out by Brayer Group plc, who undertake maintenance work for Guildford Council.

Next time you really want a lead or copper roof but can't have them, maybe single ply might be a suitable alternative.

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