

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

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HERITAGE CRIME



1. INTRODUCTION

Inexpensive but effective security measures for heritage properties

Heritage crime is a growing concern, with criminals targeting stately homes, scheduled monuments, places of worship, museums, and listed buildings. Especially if heritage assets are open to the public, which may require a unique mind-set and novel approach when developing and implementing mitigation measures. This guidance note has been drafted for CLA members to help them reduce the likelihood of an attack on heritage assets in their stewardship.

Criminals will generally look for the course of least resistance; guardianship of a heritage asset comes with a responsibility to protect that asset for future generations. It is incumbent on the current generation to do as much as possible to defend the heritage of the future.

2. EXAMPLES OF HERITAGE CRIME

- Theft of an artifact from a house whether or not open to the public
- Deliberate damage to a scheduled monument
- Nighthawking (unauthorised metal detecting)
- Graffiti
- Arson
- Theft of structural material from heritage assets (lead from roofs, stonework, paving stones)
- Unauthorised damage to, or demolition of, a listed building

3. DIFFERENT TYPES OF THEFT

- **Opportunist** – criminal activity by the individual has not been planned but they spot an opportunity to take advantage of a situation for illicit gains to themselves. This is often spontaneous, without consideration of the impacts of their action.
- **Distraction** – a criminal will steal or disrupt something by tricking an individual into giving their attention to something else. This could be common in heritage properties which use tour guides.
- **Local amateurs** – a criminal who seeks out easy targets for low-level criminal activity. Often referred to as a petty thief. These criminals are also habitual opportunists, constantly scanning for possible targets. Attacks are often haphazard, with a low-level of skill employed.
- **Professional** – a criminal who depends on the proceeds of their criminality for their livelihood, making up a substantial proportion of their income. These actors have often developed specialist skills and patterns in their criminal behaviour.
- **Blitzkrieg** – a surprise attack, using rapid and overwhelming force. This could be a ram-raid or a mob of criminals descending on a loan warden.

4. LAYERS OF PREVENTION

Vigilance

- **Reconnaissance** - ensure that key staff members are trained to spot a potential reconnaissance visit, this could be people who don't seem interested in the tour and may move through several rooms quickly but then dwell longer in another room. Individuals may appear to study, or take pictures of doors, windows and alarms. They may also check if other doors are locked by pretending to be disorientated and try to walk through a door which isn't on the tour route.
- **Vehicles** - be alert to vehicles which are parked in unusual places, for example away from others in the far corner of a car park or elsewhere. Pay additional attention to visitors who appear to approach the property from the 'wrong' direction.
- **Neighbours** - collaborate with the local community, specifically those living in the immediate vicinity of your property as they will be valuable eyes and ears on early warning of an attack. Encourage people to record and report suspicious behaviour and provide them with a 24hr phone number to alert you if they have any concerns.
- **Surveillance** - use CCTV cameras in key areas of your property, ideally with a live-feed accessible to office / admin staff and overnight security provision.
- **Record and Report** - train staff and encourage neighbours to record and report suspicious activity, this should include a description of any vehicles and individuals. Vehicle descriptions should include make, model, colour and any other identifying features, as well as the registration number. It is helpful to know the direction of travel of a person and to understand why the reporter thought the activity suspicious. Only recommend taking a picture or video if it is safe to do so.

Perimeter

- **Gates** – Limit the number of gateways and drives that give access to the property (max 2). Don't forget field gates that give cross-country access via 4x4 from a road or a lane. Consider the material of gates, wooden gates are weaker than metal gates. Ensure gates cannot be easily lifted off their hinges and ideally use stone gateposts with secure fittings. Consider using strong chains to secure gates overnight and deter opportunist criminals.
- **Lighting** – thieves prefer to keep to the shadows; installing additional lighting in vulnerable areas such as front and rear entrance areas will improve early detection but be sure not to create obvious corridors of darkness. Consider the type of lighting you are installing, solar technology has improved to provide remote lighting solutions, also bear in mind any dark-skies projects in your area and choose lighting accordingly. Rising energy costs are a worry for many businesses and charities so choosing motion activated lighting solution should be considered to reduce the cost and light pollution from having lights on permanently.
- **Cameras** - the installation of CCTV and or ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) cameras on access routes. ANPR could be installed as part of your car park charging regime.
- **Action** – in high-risk situations, consider the installation of rising bollards. These may be costly but can be useful in preventing unauthorised vehicle access.

Protection around the building

- Place cameras and lights at a high level so they cannot be tampered with by intruders or individuals on a reconnaissance mission.
- Keep ladders and potentially helpful implements (ladders, jemmies, crow bars, axes) securely locked up: ladders should be chained to metal wall eyes.
- Consider undertaking some defensive landscaping around the property, for example soft flower beds underneath where a ladder might be placed. Plant, low level prickly shrubs where intruders might linger or try to access a window.
- Ensure there is good visibility of the property, for example a high hedge might increase privacy, but it will also provide a shield for criminals who can operate unobserved once they get beyond the hedge. This is a specifically useful measure when mitigating against theft of lead, statues, or paving stones, for which incursion into a building is not necessarily required. Enabling by-passers to have good visibility of the asset increases the risk of thieves being seen and will make them think twice before attempting an attack.
- Where possible, consider installing shutters on the ground and first floor windows and having an alarm fitted to give an alert if they are opened unexpectedly. First floor windows are often poorly defended and a common access point, especially in unoccupied guest bedrooms. Access to the main house can then be gained through unalarmed corridors and service routes.

Inside the Building

- Install movement detectors inside the building and, for larger properties, plan zones around the movements of the inhabitants so that vacant areas can be alarmed, leaving free use of the kitchen and accommodation quarters.
- Undertake periodic walk tests around the property to check security technology is working as expected. Keep an eye on the horizon for new technologies coming to the market which could offer better protection.
- Consider installing heat / smoke detection technology as an early warning of accidental fire or an arson attack.
- Fit sensors to windows, internal and external doors so you receive a notification if they are opened unexpectedly.
- Keep valuable items away from windows to reduce the ease of a smash and grab.

Get Away Routes

- Develop and test local communication networks: if an incident is taking place at a heritage property, it is helpful to have a system to alert staff and neighbours. It may be appropriate to have a protocol to disrupt opportunities for criminals to leave property in a vehicle by closing off access routes. Delaying the get-away could mean that thieves will be forced to abandon their vehicles to leave on foot, restricting the items they can carry with them and giving an opportunity for the police to recover the stolen items from the abandoned vehicle.

Staff Safety

Items, no matter how valuable, can be replaced: people can't. Staff, volunteers and neighbours must be instructed not to place themselves at risk of attack. If the property is being raided, staff should be trained to lock themselves in a room, turn the lights off, put their phones onto silent and use it to notify the police and other members of staff.

Staff should not be encouraged to confront intruders but instead keep their distance and note down any potential evidence, for example a description of the individual(s), time and location etc. What3Words is a useful App to give accurate location information.

5. TOP TIPS TO FOIL DISTRACTION THEFT IN PROPERTIES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Two or more people: may pretend not to know each other but may communicate with glances or hand movements. One intends to distract the guide / room attendant by asking questions about something on the perimeter of the room, causing the guide to face away from the other assailant who will grab a targeted item and conceal it under a coat or jacket, or in a bag.

Experienced staff will develop an instinct for peculiar behaviour from certain visitors. If a member of staff suspects a visitor may have malicious intentions, they should contact (text/ WhatsApp) for support from a second guide to quietly join the back of the tour so that there are two pairs of eyes watching the suspicious persons.

Being proactive can unnerve the would-be offenders; advise staff to go and talk to them, ask them innocent questions to make it obvious the staff are alert to their presence. This attention is not what they want, and they will usually leave quickly of their own accord.

If the guide is solo and is asked a question, they should answer it while turning sideways on to the questioner, in a position where they can still observe the rest of the room with minimal effort. The person waiting to steal the item should become uneasy because it isn't going to plan, and their behaviour will probably give them away.

Movement of valuables

Avoid leaving small valuable items within reach. Vases and jugs can (if not transparent) be filled with lead shot: this makes them an effort to lift, conceal or carry and a pile of lead shot on the floor is a giveaway. Where there are clusters of small portable items (on tables, sideboards or mantelpieces) photograph them as a record of what should be there.

If the property displays high value items that are particularly portable and therefore vulnerable, once all visitors have left the area close all the shutters and remove the items to another place. Use a trolley for speed and ease of safe handling and cover them with a tablecloth. They can be stored overnight in a safe, a cupboard, under a bed or even just another secure room at the other end of the house. When thieves break in and find that the items aren't where they thought they

would be they are going to be very confused: they have probably activated the alarms by this stage and they have no time to search elsewhere: they are going to grab anything they can, leave, and be very disappointed that the proceeds of their night's work barely covers the cost of their petrol.

Contacting the Police

Make contact with the police as soon as you suspect an attack. If it is a crime in progress then you should always call 999, if it is suspicious activity then you should submit intelligence to your local police force via the 101 service. The police may request a detailed description or CCTV footage / still photos of the thieves or their vehicles.

Unauthorised alterations or demolition of heritage assets

Some of the physical measures suggested in this Guidance Note, like CCTV, may require planning permission and/or listed building consent. For more detail, see the CLA Guidance Notes *Getting heritage and other consents* (separate versions for England and Wales), and the Guidance Note *Heritage Enforcement and Prosecution* noted below. CLA Heritage Guidance Notes can be found [here](#).

More generally, it is a criminal offence to make unauthorised alterations to or demolish a listed building, or to demolish an unlisted building in a conservation area. The maximum penalty is two years in prison and an unlimited fine. This applies to anyone, including criminals and trespassers, and also building owners and staff or contractors working for them. Ignorance of the need for consent is not a defence.

It is important therefore to ensure that any staff, volunteers, and tenants are aware of the heritage assets on your property, and that they know and understand how those assets are protected by the law. This might be done by providing people with a factsheet about the assets they are likely to come into contact with, the rules protecting those assets, and the penalty if the rules are broken. If you are not sure which assets on your property are protected, then you can view a map online here <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/heritage-assets/nhle/>

It is important to note that listing can sometimes cover not only the building in the official list description, inside and out, but also fixtures, any buildings attached to the listed building and ancillary to it at the date of listing, and any pre-1948 non-attached structures which were ancillary to it at the date of listing and in its curtilage. The listing of a house might thus also cover (for example) a separate pre-1948 gardener's cottage, garden walls, or a ha-ha, even if these are not mentioned in the list description, and even if they are of no heritage interest.

For more detail on unauthorised alterations to heritage assets please refer to the CLA Guidance Note *Heritage Enforcement and Prosecution in England and Wales*.

Nighthawking

Nighthawking is the illegal search for and removal of artifacts from the ground on land without the permission of the landowner, whether by day or at nighttime. It is also an offence to damage a protected archaeological site, a Scheduled Monument or use metal detecting equipment on one without a licence from Historic England. In addition, if anything found meets the definition of treasure it must be reported to the local coroner within 14 days. The maximum penalty for failure to do so is an unlimited fine and up to 3 months in prison.

(Metal detecting is not permitted on scheduled monuments, SSSIs, and known archaeological sites on Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement land.)

A recent nighthawking case in Northumberland was foiled by volunteers in the local Farmwatch group who suspected illegal activity on Hadrian's Wall, which is a scheduled monument and a UNESCO site. The volunteers requested assistance from the police to investigate. Arrests have been made and a criminal trial is pending.

Taking steps to mitigate against nighthawking is predominantly about communication and empowering staff, volunteers, visitors and the local community to report any suspicious activity on or near a scheduled monument. As with other heritage assets, the key is that everybody understands where scheduled monuments are located, and the penalty for misconduct.

For assets which are potential nighthawk targets it may be worth considering some signage in a strategic area such as a layby or carpark to let people know the potential penalty for the offences and the mitigation (surveillance) measures in place in the area.

If a landowner does want to allow metal detecting on their land it is recommended that anybody being given permission should be a member of one of the various national metal detecting organisations. They have codes of conduct for their members, which all metal detectorists should follow. There is a national code [at the Portable Antiquities website](#). There should be an agreement in writing before access is granted which records the details of the permission and any agreement on apportionment of any reward should Treasure be found. Templates are available from the Legal Department.

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