

Police track stolen lead

THIEVES who target rural communities in Teesdale beware – the police are on to you.

The warning came after the arrest of a man in connection with the theft of 150 metres of lead from the roof of St Mary's Church, in Cockfield.

Police were able to trace the stolen metal because officers covered it with Smart Water beforehand. Smart Water has a liquid code, which can be read under ultraviolet light.

Sgt Chris Knox, from Barnard Castle Police, said: "There been a number of these offences committed in Teesdale over the past six months, but we're using Smart Water to help tackle rural crime."

In January, lead was stripped from above the chancel and vestry at St Mary's – a crime that dismayed villagers who spend years raising £100,000 to repair the roof of the building.

After the incident, David Sellwood, Police Community Liaison Officer, provided builders at St

Mary's Church with Smart Water so they could apply it to the replacement lead.

Thieves again targeted the church on the weekend of May 16 and May 17.

Cockfield beat officer PC Dave Williamson searched local scrap yards and identified the stolen lead, thanks to the Smart Water's unique code. A local man has been arrested and police also seized a small amount of cannabis resin during a search of his property. The man has been bailed while police carry out further investigations.

Mr Sellwood has also applied Smart Water in villages across Teesdale, Sgt Knox said.

He added: "We've been identifying places that have been targeted before or we think could be potential victims."

Anyone with more information about the crime is asked to contact police on 0345 60 60 365 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 11.