

Key points from meeting with DEFRA on 17th June 2005

Organisations represented at the meeting: Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) , English Heritage, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Association of Local Government Officers (ALGAO), Portable Antiquities Reporting Scheme (PAS), and National Council for Metal Detecting (NCMD).

ELS

- No restrictions on metal detecting, other than those detailed for SSSI's and Scheduled Monuments.
- Whilst there would be no mandatory reporting requirement, all present agreed the importance of voluntary reporting of finds with the landowners agreement
- DEFRA agreed to address the NCMD concern that the guidelines in the Scheme booklets appeared to be rather negative and unclear with reference to responsible metal detecting. DEFRA will make an amendment to clause 5.5 in the reprint of the ELS scheme handbooks. Meanwhile a simple flyer to clarify the position could be prepared together with a letter to be published in the hobby magazines.
- A regular review of the scheme operation with regard to metal detecting was agreed necessary and the first of these has been scheduled for 20 September 2006.
- DEFRA will issue the PAS with guidelines for the FLO's.
- DEFRA have already issued approximately eighteen thousand scheme packs to date. It is expected that some 70% of landowners will eventually sign up to the scheme.

CSS

- Applications to metal detect will only be mandatory for metal detecting on 'agreement' land. However, DEFRA recommend that the application procedure should be used for the whole of the holding, rather than just the agreement land, to ensure there is no breach of cross-compliance clauses. Where it has been clearly established that there are no known sites on the holding, through consultation with the Historic Environment Record (HER), this application procedure will not be necessary.
- The role of the landowner as owner of non-treasure finds was recognised and the Guidance amended to reflect this.
- The definition of damage to an archaeological site was clarified
- The NCMD raised its concern over the proscription of metal detecting on permanent grass fields (currently defined as those fields that have been under grass for five years or longer). DEFRA agreed to remove this proscription, other than where the HER can show that metal detecting would in fact damage a known site of archaeological interest or previously undisturbed permanent grassland. There should be a careful assessment to ensure that no damage will be caused to the environmental value of the land, including earthworks, stratified sites

and also semi-natural grassland swards, where in most cases because of its unimproved nature and limited fertiliser application, is highly likely to be protected by other statutory or voluntary agreements and thereby not available for metal detecting.

- DEFRA will issue the PAS with guidelines for the FLO's.
- A regular review of the scheme was agreed necessary and the first of these has been scheduled for 20 September 2006.
- The current CSS scheme guidance draft version 6, March 2005 will be amended to include the agreed changes and DEFRA anticipate internal approval of the final draft within two months.

HLS

- There was only to be a proscription of detecting without DEFRA permission on the known archaeological sites listed in the Farm Environment plan.
- DEFRA anticipated that the application procedure would be addressed to make it less bureaucratic.
- It is anticipated that this scheme will attract 2500 to 3000 applications per year and eventually cover some 10% of farmland. The first agreements are to come on line in the Autumn of 2005.
- The Farm Environmental Plan (FEP) is to be prepared with advice from the County or Local Authority HER's or Ancient Monument records. ALGAO indicated that archaeological sites added to the FEP in this scheme are likely to be larger ones.
- Access to the remainder of the holding would not be restricted, though the landowner would be required to ensure that damage does not occur to the archaeological sites listed in the Farm Environment Plan.

General

- DEFRA RDS officers will liaise directly with metal detector users and FLO's to facilitate metal detecting applications.
- Peter McCrone – DEFRA RDS and Roger Bland – Head of PAS will be invited to speak about their roles in the ES schemes at an NCMD Ordinary Meeting in the Autumn.
- The Countryside Agency and Rural Development Service of DEFRA is to form a new organisation - 'Natural England'. DEFRA stated that this will not change any agreements reached on metal detecting on CSS or EL and HL agri-environment schemes so far reached between the NCMD and DEFRA.