

MLA commits to funding Portable Antiquities Scheme

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An independent report, published today, has endorsed the MLA's approach to funding the highly-valued Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). MLA contributes the overwhelming portion of funds and is now able to confirm allocation of £1.3 million this year, rising to over £1.4 million in 2010/11.

The scheme, established 11 years ago, encourages members of the public to report archaeological finds. It will receive funding as part of the Renaissance in the Regions programme that supports the development of regional museums. The scheme will continue to be managed by the British Museum.

Roy Clare, Chief Executive at MLA says; "We have always seen the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) as strongly supporting the work of museums. We are delighted that the independent review we launched last year has confirmed the strength of this relationship. The report endorses our intention to support PAS as a vital component of our Renaissance in the Regions programme. Renaissance in the Regions is a major initiative, funded by the government, which is aimed at helping local authorities to improve museums and develop audiences across England."

"We recognise the national importance of PAS and its potential to forge strong links between museums, members of the public, finders and metal detecting organisations for the mutual benefit of helping unearth, preserve and make accessible the nation's archaeological heritage. We look forward to working with the British Museum to build on the past years' achievements and ensure the long-term sustainability of the scheme."

The recent independent review was commissioned by the MLA in conjunction with the British Museum and Department for Culture Media and Sports (DCMS). The report, by Kate Clark, recognises the connections with the work on regional museums and recommends that the scheme be continued. The MLA has welcomed the report's recommendations and intends to maintain the scheme at present levels of activity.

The future of the national scheme has been the subject of talks between the MLA, the British Museum and DCMS since the government's three year spending plans for the MLA were announced last year, which included a significant reduction in funding for the MLA. At that time, MLA committed funds for one year only, indicating its intention in principle to develop the relationship between PAS and Renaissance in the Regions.

Ends

Notes for editors

- The MLA is government's agency for museums, libraries and archives. Leading strategically, we promote best practice to inspire innovative, integrated and sustainable services for all.
- PAS is a partnership programme managed by the British Museum on behalf of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and supported by a number of museums, local authorities, universities and local partners
- The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is a voluntary scheme managed by the British Museum on behalf of the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) to record archaeological objects (not necessarily 'Treasure') found by members of the public in England and Wales. Every year many thousands of objects are discovered, many of these by metal-detector users, but also by people whilst out walking, gardening or going about their daily work. Such discoveries offer an important source for understanding our past. More information can be found on www.finds.org.uk
- The website currently records over 360,000 finds (77,606 were added in 2007 alone). The database is a valuable research tool for scholars and general public alike. Through the network of 37 Finds Liaison Officers, the PAS maintains regular contact with metal detectorists to record finds as well as liaising with over 160 metal detecting clubs and conducting popular outreach events (attended by over 33,000 people in 2007). The scheme also monitors eBay for finds of unreported Treasure and advises on export licences for detector finds.