



## Detecting on Crown Estate Foreshore.- NCMD update.

The recent implementation of a permit scheme for detector users on Crown Estate foreshore has caused some concerns. Detector users had previously searched beaches with “implied” permission provided they acted responsibly and reported any items of archaeological importance or monetary value to the proper authorities.

The new permit follows on from the recently reviewed Thames Foreshore Permit and much of the contents in the terms and conditions of that permit seemed to have been adopted for the foreshore resulting in concerns and practical problems for detector users.

Although the NCM had not been consulted prior to the introduction of the permit; the NCMD felt it necessary to request a meeting with the Crown Estate coastal manager Ian Mills to discuss various aspects of the scheme.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2008, a meeting was held at the Crown Estate Offices in London. Present at the meeting was Trevor Austin Gen Secretary, Steve Critchley Chairman, Bob Baldock Vice Chairman and Barry Morgan CCPR Representative and Ian Mills Coastal Manager for Crown Estate.

We discussed a number of issues within the terms and conditions of the permit which have caused concerns.

**The three inch restriction:** This has caused probably the most concerns and Ian Mills agreed that while this may be appropriate on some sections of the Thames foreshore he would look at the possibility of limiting excavation to the surface of the “hardpack” providing an acceptable definition could be found.

**The use of hand tools:** As we all know, many detector users use cut down spade etc. This facilitates easier removal of finds and again while this may be appropriate on some of the Thames foreshore is an unnecessary restriction when beach detecting. Ian agreed to consider this point and an extension of the definition should be possible.

**Rights reserved in relation to objects found on foreshore:** This could mean if taken literally, that all finds including ring pulls etc belonged to Crown Estate. Ian Mills agreed to look at this again with his legal advisors. However it must be remembered that as with any find, the landowner has greater legal title.

**Definition of any item of value:** It was generally agreed on this point that if an item was not of interest to the Portable antiquities Scheme or the police it was unlikely to be considered of value. Ian Mills agreed to consider this with the Crown Estate Legal Team.

**Cost and implementation of the permit:** We discussed a number of ways in which the permit could be issued to all detectorists in a more efficient and cost effective way removing most of the administrative burden from the Crown Estate, which is where all the cost of each permit is taken up. Ian Mills agreed that there may be problems but the idea had great potential for both parties.

Crown Estate will now discuss the finer point internally with their legal team. It was generally agreed that worthwhile progress had been achieved on both sides.

Trevor Austin  
NCMD General Secretary



“The meeting produced a very helpful discussion which hopefully will result in a simpler permit system for all concerned. Whilst we are always required to act within our statutory authority as set out in The Crown Estate Act, we do seek to encourage legitimate uses of the foreshore wherever possible and we would certainly include responsible metal detecting within those uses.”

Ian Mills  
Coastal Manager  
The Crown Estate