

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR METAL DETECTING



The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State DCMS
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

6th November 2020

Dear Mr Dowden,

COVID RESTRICTIONS ON METAL DETECTING FROM 5TH NOVEMBER 2020

The National Council for Metal Detecting (NCMD) has noted with some concern the updated guidance on searching for archaeological finds in England during covid-19 as detailed in <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-searching-for-archaeological-finds-in-england-during-covid-19#events>

Our concern relates to the statement that metal detecting can no longer be pursued on privately owned land and is now only permitted in "public outdoor space" such as public parks and beaches.

This restriction is causing extreme confusion and frustration for our membership who have always assumed that detecting alone or with their household (or bubble) or with one other from another household, was still permissible irrespective of the tenure of the land. When you consider that the Angling Trust has advised its members that fishing is permitted under the 'outdoor leisure' guidance, the confusion becomes more apparent. On the face of it, there is one rule for anglers and another rule for hobby metal detectorists.

Can you please explain the reasoning behind this decision to restrict metal detecting to "public outdoor space"?

(Redacted) Head of Cultural Property, Collections, was as helpful as she could be and confirmed that this is the consequence of the regulations specifying that recreation can take place in a "public outdoor space". The NCMD however, maintains that pursuing our hobby on private land involves a far lower risk of interacting with the public than in a public open space such as a park or beach. Private land incidentally also includes homeowner's gardens and it would seem draconian to suggest that people cannot carry out metal detecting within their own property.

The NCMD fully accepts that there are public health issues involved in any outdoor pursuit at this difficult time and we continue to actively advise our members to follow government guidance at all times.

The current general covid guidance <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november#meeting-others-safely> includes 'the countryside' in the definition of 'outdoor places' which is only serving to add to everyone's confusion.

I would therefore be grateful if you could explain why the hobby of metal detecting appears to have been selected by the government in apparent isolation as special case for imposing new restrictions and the reasoning behind the ban on accessing private land which I would respectfully request should be removed from the regulations.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,

Alastair Hackett, NCMD President

cc Boris Johnson MP, Prime Minister

(Redacted) Head of Cultural Property, DCMS