



Treasuring Our Past

Portable Antiquities & Treasure Strategy: 2020

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) records archaeological finds found by the public, to advance knowledge, tell the stories of past communities and further public interest in the past. It is a partnership scheme, managed by the British Museum (BM) in England and Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales (AC-NMW) in Wales, working with at least 119 national and local partners, and delivered through its network of 38 locally based Finds Liaison Officers, the PAS Central Unit and National Finds Advisers, interns and community volunteers.

Key Achievements

- The PAS has **recorded over 1 million archaeological finds** discovered by the public on its online database, helping to **identify new archaeological sites** and help **rewrite our understanding of the past**.
- Over **10,530 Treasure finds have been reported** via the PAS, of which 37% have been **acquired by 215 museums** across England and Wales for public benefit.
- PAS data is **important to archaeological research**, and has been used in at least 455 research projects, including 20 pieces of large-scale research and 95 PhDs.
- The PAS has **engaged directly with over 326,400 people** in the last five years; through PAST Explorers it is **expanding its volunteer base** and **providing new opportunities for people to get involved** in archaeology.
- The **PAS database and websites** have been visited by over **2,255,000 unique visitors** since 2010, with over **24,028,000 page requests**.
- PAS data is used by Historic Environment Records (HERs) and others to help **protect the historic environment** and **inform archaeological survey and investigation**.
- The **Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales** provides the baseline for best practice for those searching for archaeology.
- The PAS **provides a model for other finds recording systems**, such as those being established in Flanders, Denmark, the Netherlands and Finland.

Our vision and aims¹

The PAS seeks to transform our knowledge of the archaeology and history of England and Wales through the recording of archaeological finds found by the public.

In order to do this the PAS:

- promotes the maximum public interest and benefit from the recovery, recording and research of portable antiquities;
- promotes best practice by finders/landowners and archaeologists/museums in the discovery, recording and conservation of finds made by the public;
- in partnership with museums and others, raises awareness among the public of recording archaeological finds in their context and facilitates research in them;
- creates partnerships between finders and museums/archaeologists to increase participation in archaeology and advance our understanding of the past;
- supports the Treasure Act, and increases opportunities for museums to acquire archaeological finds for public benefit.

Our approach

The PAS is based on a unique relationship of trust between archaeologists, museum curators, finders and landowners, founded on a belief that through recording such finds together we can advance our understanding of the past, and then share that knowledge with others.

- The PAS is a partnership project, managed by the British Museum (BM) in England and Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales (AC-NMW) in Wales. Its aims and objectives are delivered through its network of local partners, guided by the Portable Antiquities Advisory Group (PAAG), in England, and the Gweithgor PAS Cymru Working Group, in Wales. Both groups consist of national stakeholders.
- Through its network of 38 locally based Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs), supported by local partners, the PAS provides people from all backgrounds with the highest quality advice and support regarding archaeological finds that they discover and wish to learn about.
- The work of the FLOs is supported by a Central Unit (based at the BM and AC-NMW) and a team of National Finds Advisers, as well as other experts (archaeologists, curators, scientists and educators) based in institutions across England and Wales.
- The PAS works closely with finders and volunteers and to ensure that as many finds as possible are recorded on its online database (www.finds.org.uk/database), and that this data is made available to all for the benefit of archaeology and our knowledge about the past.
- The PAS connects the BM, AC-NMW and local partners with a breadth of audiences across England and Wales, working hand-in-hand with museums and others stakeholder organisations to engage with local people about archaeological finds.
- The PAS highlights partnership working at its best, with the BM, AC-NMW and local partners working together to deliver a scheme that is both locally bespoke, and fostering an ethic and commitment based on agreed core aims.

¹ These aims were agreed by the PAAG.

Our Strategic Objectives

There are five strategic objectives which provide the framework for specific goals (see overleaf) for the PAS, looking to where it will be in 2020:

- **Advance archaeological knowledge:** to tell the stories of past peoples and the places where they lived;
- **Share archaeological knowledge:** so that people might learn more about the past, and the archaeology and history of their local area;
- **Promote best archaeological practice:** so that the past is preserved for future generations to learn about and enjoy;
- **Support museum acquisitions of archaeological finds:** so that these discoveries can be saved for future generations, and enjoyed by local people;
- **Provide the PAS with long-term sustainability:** so that archaeological finds found by the public can continue to rewrite our history.

Advancing Archaeological Knowledge: to tell the stories of past peoples and the places where they lived

Through its online database the PAS produces a virtual collection of public finds, with the aim of advancing archaeological knowledge and helping to protect and preserve the historic environment for future generations. This data is used to increase knowledge of the historic landscape and material culture across England and Wales, and through time.

Where we are now:

- The PAS has recorded over 1,120,000 archaeological finds found by the public, including over 10,530 Treasure finds. This data is made available through the PAS online database as well as academic and popular publications, and the media.
- 455 research projects have used PAS data. Many of these researchers are based in the UK's top universities and other institutions, including those abroad.
- To date £1,470,836 has been granted to further archaeological research using PAS data. This includes major research projects and PhDs.
- 56 HERs have access to PAS data for development control work and to enable archaeological investigation and research.
- PAS has brought to light significant discoveries that have led to wider partnerships, further research and public engagement, as in the case of the Staffordshire Hoard.
- Many new archaeological sites have been discovered, leading to further archaeological survey and fieldwork.

By 2020 the PAS will:

- Prioritise the recording of **finds that advance archaeological knowledge**, especially those of greatest research value and with excellent findspot information. Agreed priorities will be developed from 2016 to further this aim.
- Work with HERs and research institutions to **develop and seek funding for local research projects**, and **share this information with local communities through regional and local museums**.
- Create a network of partnerships with universities and others across the UK, in order to **further the understanding and use of PAS data in academic research**.
- Develop **new strategies for recording common non-metallic small finds** (particularly lithics and pottery).
- **Initiate a European Finds Group** to develop a common methodology for recording archaeological finds found by the public, with the long-term aim of developing a pan-European platform for recording these finds.

Sharing Archaeological Knowledge: so that people might learn more about the past, and the archaeology and history of their local area

The PAS helps create national and local partnerships between all those interested in archaeological finds in order to share knowledge about the past with all for public benefit. Through the BM's National Programme and other partnerships there is an opportunity for the PAS and its partners to engage with wider and more diverse audiences than has hitherto been achieved. Key to this are its FLOs, who, through their host institutions and local links, connect with local people to share knowledge about archaeology and history.

Where we are now:

- The PAS has engaged with over 326,400 people in the last five years, including 57,500 children. It has been particularly successful in breaking down barriers between archaeologists and the metal-detecting community.
- Over 2,255,000 unique visitors have visited the PAS database and website since 2010, giving them the opportunity to learn about new discoveries from their area.
- Through its network of FLOs, the PAS has links with 55 museums and 64 other organisations, as well as 197 metal-detecting clubs.
- The PAS provides local-expertise, especially in terms of archaeological finds, supporting local heritage services, including museums and HERs.
- Through PAST Explorers (funded by the HLF) the PAS is recruiting volunteers from the local community to assist with finds recording and archaeological outreach work.
- The PAS communicates its work well through national and local media, as well as via printed publications, online and through social media.

By 2020 the PAS will:

- Achieve **better public recognition of its work**, by clarifying its identity, strengthening its partnerships, improving its database and websites, and implementing a robust media strategy.
- Through the BM's National Programme and other such partnerships, and supported by the BM, AC-NMW, and local museum curators, **highlight the value of public finds in museums** for understanding the past of local communities.
- Highlight the significance of PAS and Treasure finds as a **teaching resource for schools**, particularly as a tool for teaching prehistory and local history.
- **Deliver the HLF funded PAST Explorers** project, which includes producing County Pages, engaging with a further 300,000 people, and recruiting 500 volunteers.
- Create a **comprehensive training programme** on archaeological finds recording and identification for a wide range of audiences, including heritage professionals, finders and volunteers.
- Support dialogue between BM and AC-NMW curators, FLOs, local museum staff and others, to **understand and interpret finds** recorded through the PAS (particularly those acquired by museums) and **develop finds identification and recording skills**.
- Seek to **develop and enhance relationships with local HERs**, so that PAS data can be made available to the widest possible audience.
- Implement a strategic framework to **publish books and articles and online resources**, to inform as many as possible about the archaeology of Britain.
- Develop a process for **obtaining digital records of archaeological finds made by the public**, particularly those found before PAS was established.

Promote Best Archaeological Practice: so that the past is preserved for future generations to learn about and enjoy

The PAS has an essential role, working with other archaeologists (with the support of finders and landowners), in advising on best practice, in order to preserve underlying archaeology. The plough-soil is a valuable archaeological resource where material culture is vulnerable to agricultural and environmental damage. The PAS, with its partners, has an important role in ensuring that archaeological finds from the plough-soil are recorded, so as to understand and manage that resource.

Where we are now:

- The *Code of Practice for Responsible Metal-Detecting in England and Wales* (agreed by the main archaeological, landowner and metal-detecting organisations) is the benchmark for all members of the public searching on land under Countryside Stewardship, and that owned by the Crown Estate and Port of London Authority.
- The *Guidance on Metal Detecting Rallies in England and Wales* has been endorsed by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers, the Council for British Archaeology, Historic England, the PAS and the Society for Museum Archaeologists, and recognised by two of the main rally organisers.
- The PAS database follows the MDA Archaeological Objects Thesaurus, and PAS staff are trained to record archaeological finds to highest possible standards.
- The *Treasure Act 1996 Code of Practice (Revised)* gives guidance on best practice regarding Treasure finds, including financial abatements for wrong-doing.
- The PAS is a member of the Heritage & Cultural Property Crime Working Group, and the Alliance to Reduce Crime against Heritage.
- The PAS worked with colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to develop *Advice for People Buying Archaeological Objects from the UK* and has a MoU with eBay for monitoring that site for non-reported Treasure.
- *PAS Conservation Advice Notes* were produced by the York Archaeological Trust.

By 2020 the PAS will:

- Work with others in the heritage sector and stakeholders to develop clearer **guidance for the public on best practice while searching for archaeological objects**, and to highlight the practical benefits to archaeology of responsible metal-detecting.
- Advocate a **better system for recording archaeological finds found on metal-detector rallies**, where organisers take responsibility for ensuring best practice.
- Ensure **acknowledgement for individual finders** who follow best practice; through non-monetary recognition.
- Work with other heritage bodies to develop a protocol for the **emergency excavation and processing of major archaeological finds** found by the public.
- Work with colleagues and the public to **better understand the value of metal-detecting in the plough-zone** that is sensitive to the needs of protecting the historic environment.
- Work with colleagues, including landowners and the police, to **better use PAS resources to protect the historic environment**, specifically against illegal metal-detecting (nighthawking).
- Work with the DCMS on a **new *Treasure Act 1996 Code of Practice***, following the Review of the Treasure Act, to normalise guidance regarding Treasure.
- Work with European colleagues (particularly in the Low Countries and Scandinavia) to enable them to **develop systems for recording public finds and sharing data**.
- Work with the Receiver of Wreck and others (such as CiTiZAN) to ensure the **better reporting of marine and coastal finds** of archaeological significance.

Support Museum Acquisitions of Archaeological Finds: so that these discoveries can be saved for future generations, and enjoyed by local people

The most important archaeological finds should be acquired by museums across England and Wales, so that the public might enjoy these finds and learn about the past. The PAS is ideally placed to support accredited museum acquisition of interesting and important finds, including Treasure, and also assist the work of archaeologists and museum curators to publicise, interpret and display them.

Where we are now:

- 21 FLOs are employed within local museums. The PAS has regular contact with 55 museums across England and Wales.
- Over 3,800 Treasure finds have been acquired by at least 215 museums for local people to learn about and enjoy since 1997.
- Many museums have displays that feature the work of the PAS, which include finds acquired through the work of PAS or Treasure.
- FLOs are involved with exhibitions and displays that feature the local work of PAS and highlight important discoveries.
- Museums are receiving PAS finds as bequests or donations, including large metal-detected assemblages.

By 2020 the PAS will:

- Work closely with local museums to **highlight new acquisitions** recorded by the PAS or reported Treasure.
- Through the BM's National Programme and other partnerships, and supported by BM, AC/NMC and local curators, and other experts, **highlight the value of public finds for understanding the past of local communities** (see above).
- In partnership with museum colleagues and funders, **offer training to local museum curators on how best to acquire PAS and Treasure finds.**
- Advise finders on how they might **donate or bequeath their collections** to local museums.
- **Develop a Treasure Tracking System** (as part of the PAS database), so that finders, museums and other interested parties can be properly informed on the progress of Treasure cases.

Provide the PAS with Long-term Sustainability: so that archaeological finds found by the public can continue to rewrite the history of Britain

The UK Government has strongly supported the work of the PAS since its inception, recognising that its network of FLOs is instrumental in delivering the Treasure Act, as well as the recording of non-Treasure finds. The BM is committed to deliver the PAS in England through its grant-in-aid and other resources. Likewise, AC-NMW will work with MALD and Cadw to resource and deliver PAS in Wales. In order to achieve our ambitions for the PAS outlined above we will consider carefully how best to direct, raise and spend funds as part of our partnerships and work across England and Wales.

Where we are now:

- Through its network of FLOs the PAS benefits (directly or indirectly) all museums with an archaeological collection, as well as all national and local partners involved with managing and protecting the historic environment.
- 45 staff work as part of the PAS, which includes a Head of Portable Antiquities & Treasure, a Resources manager, five Finds Advisers and 38 Finds Liaison Officers (some of these posts are part-time).
- The BMs Treasure Team consists of a Treasure Registrar and four Assistant Treasure Registrars (one of whom is part-time).
- The BM also employs four members of staff as part of the HLF-funded, PAST Explorers, which is a five year project to engage with local community volunteers in finds recording work (two of these posts are part-time).
- Between 2003 and 2015 the PAS also had a dedicated ICT Adviser to maintain and develop the PAS websites and database; from 1 May 2015 this responsibility was transferred to the BMs Digital & Publish and Information Systems teams.

By 2020 the PAS will:

- Through centralised grants processes **use all funds and staff resources efficiently and effectively** as possible, including in-kind contributions.
- Through BM Development, and with local partners, **explore creative funding opportunities** to supplement the core work of the PAS and Treasure, including research, archaeological investigation and museum display.
- Ensure on-going **maintenance and development of the PAS database** and web-presence.
- Have an **appropriately resourced team** of locally based FLOs, to deliver the work of PAS in the regions and ensure the efficient running of the Treasure Act.
- Support that work through the PAS Central Unit and the NFAs, **drawing upon the expertise of BM, AC-NMW and local museum curators**, and other experts.
- Develop **stronger regional teams of FLOs** to support one another and deliver the Scheme's aims effectively and efficiently, drawing upon the expertise and experiences of each other.
- **Properly recognise the skills and expertise of PAS staff**, so that they can work on other PAS related projects, and will work with local partners to recognise long-service and career aspirations of FLOs and others.
- Create a robust system of measurement for the impact and success of the PAS in terms of **qualitative and quantitative data**.