

Portable Antiquities Scheme: briefing for DCMS

- PAS is a **voluntary scheme to record archaeological objects** found by the public. It is funded (£1.3 million in 2007/8) via the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council
- In 10 years the **PAS has recorded more than 314,000 archaeological finds** on its online database (www.finds.org.uk), the largest online database of its kind anywhere in the world.
- The data generated by **PAS is increasingly being used for research**: 17 recently-completed or current PhDs and 30 other dissertations which use PAS data, and PAS is a partner in 8 AHRC-funded research projects.
- In 2006 **PAS organised 776 outreach events**: as part of National Archaeology Week 2007 PAS staff were involved in 69 events across the country, attended by 6,925 people and examined 2,331 finds. PAS has proved effective at bringing people into museums who don't otherwise attend them; 46% of visitors to Fabulous Finds Days (Museums & Galleries Month 2005) had **never previously been to that museum before**. A post-code analysis of those who have recorded finds with PAS show that 47% were from social classes C2, D and E, compared with 32% of visitors to museums
- In 2006, **247,103 unique visitors visited** the PAS database and website (www.finds.org.uk) and there have been almost 82 million user hits; **a 62 per cent increase on 2005–6**. New features have been developed including educational resources for children and a Roman coin identification guide.
- **PAS is revealing many new archaeological sites**, as most archaeological investigations are developer-led, while metal-detector users are not: a recent study shows that the PAS data gathered over the last three years has revealed 24 new Roman settlements in Wiltshire, increasing the number of known settlements in the county by 15%.
- **PAS is increasingly recognised as a model of good practice by governments and scholars** in other countries, including the USA, Russia, China, France, Scandinavia, Holland, Germany, Austria, Greece and Turkey.

Support for PAS

- 149 MPs have so far signed Early Day Motion 566 in support of PAS;
- 2,350 individuals have so far signed two ePetitions supporting PAS;
- Current Archaeology currently has a vote on its website asking whether users support a national or regional PAS: the vote is 96% of 500 people who have voted are in favour of national scheme;
- Many members of the public have written to Ministers and MPs;
- Support from overseas – eg the Archaeological Institute of America; American Numismatic Society; Ancient Coin Collectors Guild;
- 17 leading professors of archaeology have written expressing their concerns;
- all the members of the Scheme's Advisory Group;
- 4 former Arts Ministers have had one meeting with Roy Clare in support of PAS and plan another one;
- Media reports in *The Guardian*, *Museums Journal*, *British Archaeology*, *Current Archaeology*.

Management of PAS

- Whole of BM from Neil MacGregor downwards is very committed to PAS: fully integrated into BM as a separate dept, absolutely key element in the BM's programme of work with regional museums (eg a touring exhibition on PAS is planned in 2010).
- BM has nothing against a review of PAS as such, but to do it against the background of cuts makes no sense because the Museum will already have had to take major decisions about future direction by the cuts that it will have to make.
- Problem with PAS has been to find best home for it as it falls between the worlds of museums and archaeology. MLA sees it exclusively as a museum project which it is not: of 34 partners, 11 are county councils.
- It had always been understood in the 2005 agreement between BM and MLA over running of PAS that complete responsibility would transfer to BM for next SR anyway.
- Whole of Advisory Group expressed concern with MLA's management of PAS.

Funding

- In 2004/05, when PAS received HLF funding, the total budget was £1.343 million and it was £1.396 million in 2005/06. In 2006/07, after DCMS took on direct funding, the budget went down to £1.262 million and is now £1.3 million in 2007/08.
- All partners contribute a 5% cash contribution towards posts.
- In 2006/07 BM was able to use underspends of HLF and DCMS funding accrued between 2003 and 2007 totalling £110K. In 2007/08 PAS has survived by (a) living off expenditure made in advance at the end of financial year 2006/07 and (b) through partners adding more than the 5% contributions, but they have indicated that they cannot do this beyond 31 March.
- Frozen funding of £1.3 million means cutting at least 4 and possibly 5 out of the current 50 posts: PAS is a front line service and the Ministers have affirmed that the purpose of the SR was to protect front-line services.
- PAS needs £1.49m to carry on at current level. This year's budget was set in 2003 and is too low. Many posts have been regraded with substantial increases in staff costs: the partners are subsidising these extra costs this year but made it clear they won't renew contracts unless full costs are met. Increased need is nearly all due to rising staff costs and we rely on the partners' co-operation to renew contracts: if they don't think they're getting enough, they won't renew.
- Consequences of £1.3 million funding next year:
 - The following posts have already been ear-marked for closure: Education Co-ordinator; two Finds Advisers; and a second, half-time, Finds Liaison Officer post in York. The BM may also need to cut a fifth post.
 - The half-time York Finds Liaison Officer was to be transferred to Teesside where it is desperately needed, as currently only 1 FLO covers the whole of the North East region from the Tees to the Scottish border: that is not possible with £1.3 million.
 - The consortium of partners in Oxon and Berks, currently covered by 1 FLO, has written to say they won't provide cover for East Berks unless an extra half-time post is funded, so there will be a gap in provision of PAS in Berks.
 - There will not be enough money to fund FLOs' travel costs which means they will have to cut down on their visits to metal detecting clubs and means Treasure process will be slowed down, as they won't be able to bring finds to London more than say twice a year.
 - Outreach activities will suffer with loss of Education Co-ordinator post and there will be no money to pay for materials for small displays or publicity material needed for Finds Day events etc., nor to pay travel expenses for volunteers.
 - There will be no money for development of PAS website, nor for the archaeological illustration of finds, essential if they are to be published in scholarly publications.
 - Regional newsletters will cease being published (currently each of 5 regions publishes one a year).
- PAS is already making all possible efficiency savings: eg saving £20K by producing a single combined Annual Report on Treasure and PAS, instead of separate ones; scrapping newsletters; saving £15K on maintenance costs for database.
- In 2007/08 the BM is making a cash contribution totalling £66K to PAS and provides the following contributions in kind provisionally costed at a further £250K:
 - Accommodation for 7 staff;
 - Management time spent by the Directorate;
 - Marketing Department producing PAS and Treasure Annual Reports and other publications;
 - Information Systems Department;
 - Human Resources;
 - Departments of Prehistory & Europe and Coins & Medals (time spent by curatorial staff providing their expertise for PAS staff);
 - Conservation, Documentation and Science.