**Comments about Volunteers**

Roger Bland, Head of the Portable Antiquities Scheme said:

“Volunteers have always been vital for the success of the Portable Antiquities Scheme

and this generous grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund will mean that we can not only

provide many more volunteering opportunities, but also give them the chance to develop

their skills. This will enable us to meet our core aim of increasing our knowledge of the

history and archaeology of England and Wales for the benefit of all.”

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund said:

“This wonderful project will help spread the reach of the Portable Antiquities Scheme

even further across England and Wales. Enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers are the

life blood of the scheme: without them it would falter. In recognition of this, individuals will

be given further opportunities to widen their knowledge and involvement which in turn will

improve the recording of archaeological finds and raise awareness at a grass-roots

level.”

**PASt Explorers Project**

**Project Summary**

PASt Explorers is a project developed by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund for five years, starting in November 2014.

Our aim is to create Community Finds Recording Teams (CFRTs) by recruiting and training volunteers from local communities around England and Wales. These teams will work with their regional Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs), increasing the capacity of the PAS to record finds. They will also promote the activities of the PAS to new audiences in their areas, and recruit others to volunteer with the PAS and engage with the history and archaeology of their local areas.

The project will lead to new data being generated for the PAS website and a new section of the PAS website will be developed, the County Pages, which will be devoted to the work of the CFRTs and to the finds history and archaeology of their local areas.

**Aims**

PASt Explorers aims to:

* engage a wider audience of volunteers;
* through volunteers, engage a wider audience at a local level, beyond the traditional archaeological and historical groups, who will help inspire interest in heritage in others;
* enable members of the local community to adopt an integral role in recording finds and building up knowledge of the archaeology and history of their local area;
* increase the capacity of the PAS to record finds;
* provide training for volunteers to enable them to learn more about archaeological finds and how to record them, providing a broader understanding of archaeological processes;
* provide care and protection for the historic environment delivered by local communities through fostering an interest in the care of their archaeological heritage and by providing knowledge of the issues threatening the survival of the archaeological record.

**New Project Posts**

The project will recruit an Outreach Officer to support volunteers and FLOs and help coordinate PASt Explorers, two part-time Project Officer posts to check data and deliver the volunteer training programme, and an ICT Officer. All will be based at the British Museum, but the Outreach and Project Officers will spend much of their time with local CFRTs.

**Community Finds Recording Teams**

The CFRTs will be formed of volunteers from local communities. These can be volunteers new to the PAS or individuals with lots of finds experience and include those who want to volunteer in-house with their local FLO, home-based volunteers, self-recorders or those who would like to help record their detecting club’s finds.

PAS volunteer roles are diverse so each volunteer will be doing something slightly different, such as object identification, weighing and measuring finds, creating database records, data cleansing, washing finds, photography & image manipulation, finds research or recording their own finds. Details of available roles will be set out in role descriptions available from your local FLO.

**Training Programme**

After volunteering for an amount of time agreed with the local FLO, volunteers will be given the opportunity to join the PASt Explorers training programme.

The training programme is training provided regionally through the PAS, which comprises modules of various aspects of finds work, such as finds photography, coin identification, Bronze Age artefacts. Volunteers may take as many of these modules as they like. There will also be opportunities to go on other PAS and regional training courses.

As part of the project, the cost of volunteers’ travel to training will be reimbursed through the PAS.

**Volunteer Events**

A PAS volunteer conference will be held each year, with talks by fellow volunteers about their experiences, researchers using PAS data to illustrate how volunteers have contributed to archaeological knowledge and others.

Volunteers will also be invited to meet other volunteers from around the country, PAS and British Museum staff members at an annual celebration held at the British Museum each summer.

**Outreach Programme**

Volunteers may like to get involved with outreach work, which they can talk to their local FLO about. Basic training in outreach work can be arranged through the Outreach Officer and guidelines on how to undertake outreach work will eventually be available on the County Pages.

**County Pages**

The County Pages will be a new addition to the PAS website and database, providing user-friendly information on each FLO area in the form of blogs, features about finds and general research, finds guides, local detector, archaeological and historical societies, information on the processes of finds recording and reporting Treasure and other useful information on local finds.

**Data Protection**

PAS database records are made available with differing levels of information, depending on user account level. Volunteers will have varying levels of user account, depending on the nature of their role, and some will have higher level access, but each will be strictly bound by the PAS terms and conditions for higher level access.

For further information on the project or to get involved as a volunteer, please contact your local FLO, <http://finds.org.uk/contacts>, or Claire Costin, ccostin@britishmuseum.org, 020 7323 8618.

**The Portable Antiquities Scheme**

**What is the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)?**

Every year, many thousands of archaeological objects are discovered by members of the public, mostly by metal-detectorists, but also by people out walking, digging their gardens or going about their everyday work. These finds have the potential to tell us a great deal about the past, how and where people used to live and the types of objects they made and used. Since it was set up in 1997, the Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) have examined over 940,000 objects, many of which would have otherwise gone unrecorded.

**Aims of PAS**

The PAS is a partnership project which records archaeological objects found by the public to advance our understanding of the past. It does this by …

* promoting the maximum public interest and benefit from the recovery, recording and research of portable antiquities
* promoting 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, raising awareness among the public of recording archaeological finds in their context and facilitating research in them
* creating partnerships between finders and museums/archaeologists to increase participation in archaeology and advance our understanding of the past;
* supporting the Treasure Act, and increasing opportunities for museums to acquire archaeological finds for public benefit.

**PAS set-up**

The PAS covers the whole of England and Wales. It is managed by the British Museum, and funded by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), the British Museum and its local partners. Its work is guided by the Portable Antiquities Advisory Group, whose membership includes archaeological, landowner and metal-detecting organisations.

**What are “Finds Liaison Officers” (FLOs)?**

They are locally-based archaeologists, currently 37 of them, spread around the country. They are based in various museums, county archaeological units and universities - the *host organisation*. The work of the PAS is co-ordinated by a Central Unit of four people based at the British Museum Department of Britain, Europe & Prehistory, plus five period specialists known as National Finds Advisors (NFAs).

The NFAs are based in various museums and universities across England and support the work of the FLOs, check their data and contribute to specialist publications and conferences to highlight the importance of portable antiquities to the understanding of our past.

The PAS is also supported by over 250 interns, volunteers and self-recorders whose contributions are invaluable to the work of the PAS and to the knowledge of the history and archaeology of England and Wales.

*Further information on the PAS can be found at the Scheme’s website,* [*http://finds.org.uk/*](http://finds.org.uk/)