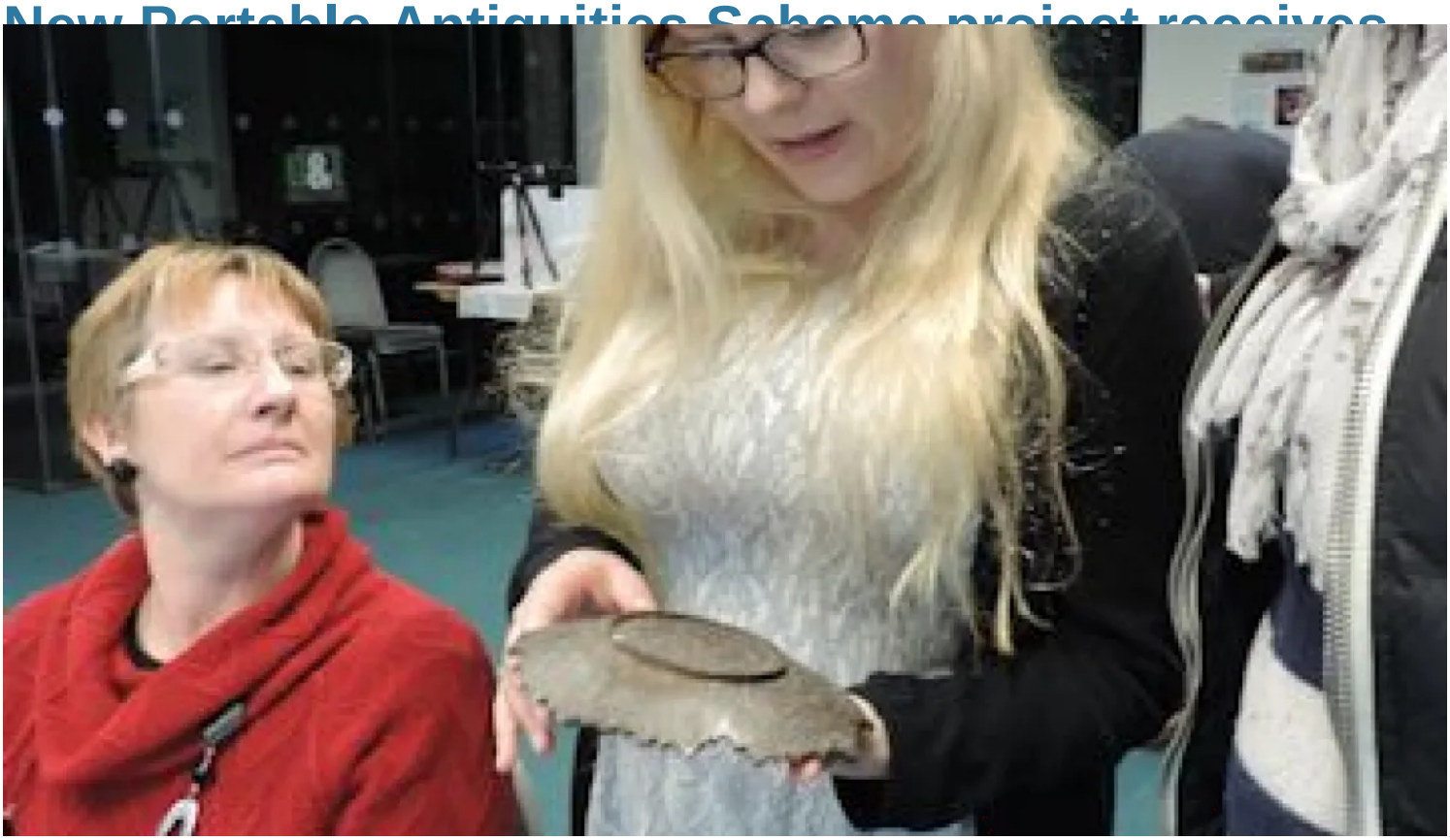
New Portable Antiquities Scheme project receives



New Portable Antiquities Scheme project receives support from Heritage Lottery Fund

The British Museum announces today a new Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) initiative that will greatly increase volunteer involvement in archaeological heritage across the UK. PASt Explorers is a five-year project that will create a national network of up to 500 trained volunteers who will participate in archaeological finds work in their local areas, sharing information through the PAS database and within their local communities. The project is generously supported by the HLF with a grant of £792,000 over five years.

The project will contribute directly to the construction of new narratives about the history of local communities across England and Wales. It will build on the existing aims of the PAS to increase opportunities for active public involvement in archaeology, especially for people who have never before participated in archaeological heritage. Volunteers will assist in the delivery of public activities in their local areas, including finds recording events, talks, displays and exhibitions and finds handling sessions. The project will raise awareness of the educational value of archaeological finds in their context, and promote the care and protection of the historic environment on a local level.

Volunteers will operate as Community Finds Recording Teams (CFRTs) based around their local Finds Liaison Officer. The teams will be organised into 10 regional training centres across the country. They will receive training in order to identify and record archaeological finds from their local area, increasing the number of objects recorded onto the PAS database where the records will be accessible to all, free of charge. Volunteers will also develop a new County Pages

section of the PAS website: central resources of information on volunteering and finds activity in each region.

The grant will also support new dedicated posts in the PAS Central Unit based at the British Museum: two Project Officers; an Outreach Officer and an ICT Officer.

The project builds on strong evidence about the power of harnessing volunteers to widen our understanding of our heritage. The PAS has a history of interacting with volunteers and for utilising the power of the crowd. Over 24,000 people have provided data for the PAS database and the public have been able to record their own finds since 2010. A current project run in partnership with the Institute of Archaeology, University College London is making use of crowdsourcing to create a digital index of Bronze Age finds. A catalogue of index cards relating to single objects and entire hoards from the Bronze Age (ca. 2500 BC - 800 BC) have been photographed and thousands of paper records scanned. The public have been assisting in 3D modelling, transcribing and locating these archaeological finds via a dedicated crowdsourcing website called MicroPasts.

Roger Bland, Head of PAS, said: "Volunteers have always been vital for the success of the Portable Antiquities Scheme and this generous grant from HLF 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 HLF, said: "This wonderful project will help spread the reach of PAS 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 grassroots level."

Notes to Editors

PAS

Thousands of archaeological objects are discovered every year, many by members of the public, particularly by people while metal-detecting. If recorded, these finds have great potential to transform archaeological knowledge, helping us understand when, where and how people lived in the past.

PAS offers the only proactive mechanism for systematically recording such finds, which are made publicly available on its PAS's official online database. This data is an important educational and research resource that can be used by anyone interested in learning more.

PAS is managed by the British Museum, and funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport through a ring-fenced grant, the British Museum and local partners. Its work is guided by the Portable Antiquities Advisory Group, whose membership includes leading archaeological, landowner and metal-detecting organisations.

Further information

Hannah Boulton, British Museum, on tel: 020 7323 8522 or email: hboulton@britishmuseum.org.