

**Title of meeting:** Culture, Regeneration and Economic Development Decision Meeting

**Date of meeting:** 11 October 2024

**Subject:** Metal Detecting Policy - review and addition of Magnet Fishing

**Report by:** Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Steve Pitt

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** No

---

**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 To advise on a revised and updated Metal Detecting Policy including magnet fishing within the same policy as such an activity has similar archaeological outcomes and health and safety considerations within public spaces.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 To approve the revised Metal Detecting Policy with the inclusion of Magnet Fishing within the same policy.

**3. Background**

3.1 A metal detecting policy was created in 2021 with the purpose of outlining the circumstances in which the council may or may not give permission for metal detecting on PCC owned and managed land.

3.2 The creation of such a policy provided a valuable framework for managing activity on land considered to have potentially great archaeological value given Portsmouth's naval history and that of a garrison town.

3.3 Since the inception of the policy in 2021 a newer version of archaeological exploration has become popular in the form of Magnet Fishing. This method of detection has had a growing public awareness since the COVID affected years when the public were confined to home and spending more time on online platforms such as YouTube where social influencers partook in such activities.



- 3.4 With a growing interest in magnet fishing the council have received enquiries and applications to magnet fish in a number of our inland water bodies such as Milton Common and Long Curtain Moat, with other locations also potentially of interest.
- 3.5 These applications highlighted that the activity was not covered by existing policies, which are limited to metal detecting on solid state surfaces, and therefore a review and revision was required to cover this type of activity as well as metal detecting.
- 3.6 A number of departments and organisations have vested interests or authority over the land upon which metal detecting or magnet fishing may take place and to that extent the following organisations have been consulted on the review of metal detecting and the inclusion of magnet fishing within the policy
- Historic England
  - Hampshire County Council - County Archaeologist
  - Crown Estate Agents - Carter Jonas
  - King's Harbour Master
  - Langstone Harbour Board
  - Parks Department including Countryside Officers for sites with inland water bodies

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

- 4.1 Portsmouth City Council has a duty to protect the heritage of the city and its archaeology. This heritage belongs to everyone and any illicit excavations risk destroying the wider context and harming our understanding of the historical development of the city.
- 4.2 The City Council also has a statutory responsibility to safeguard the heritage of Scheduled Monuments and Sites of Special Scientific Interest that it owns and manages, which are protected by law. Including magnet fishing in the existing metal detecting policy will better enable us to perform this role.
- 4.3 The City Council also has a responsibility to consider the needs of all users of its land, in particular health and safety considerations which in the case of magnet fishing takes into consideration the swinging of potentially heavy objects tethered to a line in spaces where members of the public may be in situ.

#### **5. Integrated impact assessment**

- 5.1 Integrated Impact Assessment attached at Appendix 2



**6. Legal implications**

**6.1** Legal implications are set out in section 4 of this report and in the Metal Detecting Policy (appended)].

**7. Director of Finance's comments**

**7.1** The activities proposed within this report are expected to be funded from the existing service portfolio budgets, as approved by Full Council

.....

Signed by:  
**Stephen Baily**  
**Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services**

**Appendices:**

- Appendix 1- Metal Detecting Policy
- Appendix 2 - Integrated Impact Assessment

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

.....

Signed by:  
**Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development**