UKDFD Records and the HER A Proposal For Discussion

1.0 Introduction

Prior to its launch in 2005, the UKDFD offered a facility to the PAS, which would have enabled data from UKDFD records to be copied directly to the PAS database. The aim of this move was to ensure that the information would ultimately reside in the appropriate HER. In the event, the PAS declined the offer, and has subsequently adopted a stance that precludes the possibility of any working relationship with the UKDFD. The position nevertheless remains that the UKDFD is willing to make the information available, and believes that it would represent a useful contribution to the HER. The present proposal, made in the context of this situation, is that the UKDFD creates a facility within its database software to provide for duly authorised UKDFD records to be copied directly across to the applicable HER databases. The process envisaged is outlined below, but there is clearly a considerable amount of underlying detail that would need to be discussed and agreed in advance of any commitment to proceed.

2.0 Outline of the proposed process

On creating a new UKDFD record, the recorder would have the option of choosing whether to make details available to the HER. The default setting would be that consent was granted, so that the recorder would have to make a conscious decision to change the status.

Records authorised as above would actually become available to the HER at the point that the record was either validated or moved into the 'Unidentified' category. It is not practical to make them available any earlier in the process, as a significant number are uploaded with unacceptable images, incorrect descriptions, incomplete information, etc. Some are simply rejected.

Records revised after validation, and those validated after initially being moved into the 'Unidentified' category, would also be made available to the HER to replace or supersede earlier versions that had been authorised and accepted. This would only apply to substantive changes of identification or date; minor editorial alterations, such as correcting spelling errors, would not be included.

All records available to the HER would be listed in a secure, dedicated area (which the UKDFD would incorporate into its own software), and there would be an option to accept or decline each record. The reason for this option is that many records may not be of interest to the HER, even though the recorder had made them available (e.g. certain very modern items). The area might look something like the mock-up below.

UKDFD Record No (Click to view)	Title	Issue Status	COUNTY	Accept for HER	Decline for HER
17636	Chafing Dish Handle	1	DORSET	Accept	Decline
17625	Bell Harness Pendant	1	YORKSHIRE/NORTH	Accept	Decline
17589	Annular Brooch	1	DORSET	Accept	Decline
17632	Anglo-Saxon Sceat, Series H	2	HAMPSHIRE	Accept	Decline
				Accept	Decline
				Accept	Decline
				Accept	Decline
				Accept	Decline
				Accept	Decline
				Accept	Decline

DEDICATED HER AREA ON UKDFD DATABASE

Declined records would have their HER status removed, so that they were not inadvertently placed on the list again after any subsequent revision.

The HER status of records would probably not be shown publicly on the database, but would be viewable by UKDFD staff editing the records in order to ensure that updated records were listed again on the HER screen.

The designated HER representatives (HERs) would periodically log into the dedicated area and go through the process of accepting or declining their respective records. On taking either action, the applicable records would be removed from the listing.

3.0 Implementation

If the proposed arrangements were to go ahead, there would inevitably be a number of technical and other issues that would require resolution during implementation. It is envisaged that the implementation process would consist of the following stages.

Stage 1: Reach agreement between UKDFD and HERs on the general principles of the system that will be developed. Establish whether all HERs wish to participate, and if not, is there a sufficient number to justify the effort required and meet the overall objective. Agree lines of communication. Identify one or two HERs prepared to take part in a pilot scheme.

Stage 2: UKDFD develop and test the database software in accordance with the agreed principles. Notify recorders of forthcoming changes and explain broadly how the new arrangements will work. Advise other interested parties - archaeological and metal-detecting organisations, websites, etc. - of the situation.

Stage 3: Establish a pilot scheme with one or two previously identified HERs and eliminate any teething problems. A minimum period of six months is probably required.

Stage 4: Progressively extend the system to all participating HERs.

4.0 Important points to note

The proposed arrangements would apply only to those records created after agreement had been reached and revised terms and conditions had been published on the UKDFD website and communicated to its recorders.

The UKDFD would seek a binding undertaking that no findspot it provided would be published on the Internet, or in any other publicly available format, to an accuracy greater than a fourfigure grid reference or parish, unless previously agreed to by both the finder and landowner.

While the UKDFD actively encourages voluntary recording, and this forms part of its mission statement, it recognises the right of detectorists to make that choice freely. The expectation is that the majority of recorders would also choose to make their data available to the HER via the proposed scheme, but there is no implied assurance that this would be the case.

The proposed system entails a considerable amount of work on the existing software, which the UKDFD is prepared to undertake. However, no fundamental changes to the format of the existing data structure or data type would be made. (The data in some of the record fields may not be required by the HER (e.g. detector information), so it would be necessary to agree in advance a standard list that is acceptable to all participating HERs.)

The UKDFD reserves the right to withdraw unilaterally from the proposed scheme in the event that it results in any adverse consequences for the UKDFD or the metal-detecting hobby.

UKDFD Admin Team 10 March 2009