

LAW & RESPONSIBLE DETECTING · FREE RESOURCE

Potential Treasure Action Checklist

The immediate steps to take when a find may be Treasure, part of a group, or archaeologically significant.

What's inside

- ✓ Clear, practical steps you can use straight away
- ✍ Written for real UK detecting, not theory
- 📄 Plain-English guidance, checked against official sources
- ☆ Free to print, keep and share



**Written by
detectorists**



**Checked against
UK guidance**



**Free to print and
keep**

First, is it dangerous?

Suspected ordnance, shells, munitions or weapons: **do not touch, move away and call the police (999).**

Suspected human remains: **stop and contact the police.** Treat leaking, smoking or hazardous items as dangerous, not as finds.

If the find is safe but might be Treasure or part of a group, the way you handle the next hour matters. Work through these steps in order.

✓ **Immediate steps**

- ☐ **Stop digging** if more objects or context may remain
- ☐ **Do not clean** the object
- ☐ Protect the find and the surrounding ground from further damage
- ☐ Record the exact findspot privately (coordinates or a marked point)
- ☐ Photograph the object and its context without unnecessary disturbance
- ☐ Note who was present and exactly what was moved
- ☐ Report to the correct route for your nation (see below), within the time limit
- ☐ Tell the landowner, occupier or manager as agreed
- ☐ Keep the exact findspot private; do not announce it publicly
- ☐ Keep all messages, reference numbers and receipts

Words explained

FLO (Finds Liaison Officer) a local officer of the Portable Antiquities Scheme who records finds and advises finders.

Treasure Trove Unit the Scottish body that receives and assesses reported finds.

National Museums NI the body that receives potential Treasure reports in Northern Ireland.

England & Wales

Report within 14 days

- Report potential Treasure to your **Finds Liaison Officer** (or the relevant Treasure Registry route). The 14 days run from finding it, or from realising it may be Treasure.
- The 2023 significance class applies where a qualifying object gives **exceptional insight** through rarity, find location, or connection with a person or event. It does not make all old metal Treasure.
- Any reward is **discretionary**; it can be reduced or withheld, and is not guaranteed to be shared.

Scotland

Report within about four weeks

- A different system: **Treasure Trove** under Scots law, not the Treasure Act. Report to the **Treasure Trove Unit**, usually within four weeks of first recovery.
- Hoards, fragile finds and suspected sites need immediate contact and no further digging.
- Some categories need not be reported (see the March 2026 Code). Finds may be claimed by the Crown; any finder reward is ex gratia and shared privately only after it is awarded.

Northern Ireland

Report within 14 days; licence needed

- Direct potential Treasure to **National Museums NI**, within 14 days of realising it may be Treasure.
- A **licence** is required for ground-disturbing archaeological searches; archaeological objects carry separate reporting duties. Check the current NI rules before you detect.

☆ Why not cleaning matters

Soil, corrosion and the way objects sit together are evidence. Cleaning or separating them can destroy information that decides whether a find is Treasure, and can reduce its value.

Reporting is a legal duty. Not reporting can be an offence. Penalties differ by nation and change, so follow the current official guidance rather than relying on a figure printed here.

Record the findspot (keep private)

Exact coordinates / grid ref		Coordinate system	
Date & time found		Reported to (office / person)	
Date reported		Reference number	

Quick reference only, not legal advice. Edition: UK, all nations, v1.1. Guidance checked: 24 July 2026. Next review due: by July 2027. Always confirm the current official guidance for where you detect.

Official sources: [GOV.UK Report treasure](#) [Treasure Trove Scotland](#) [National Museums NI](#)

This resource is provided for general information and personal record-keeping. Rules, official guidance and access arrangements can change. Check the current requirements for the place where you intend to detect.

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