

P.S. A correction to the DCMS FOI Treasure reward figures

by Tess Machling

I am going to be completely honest: since I started writing about detecting, as well as receiving support from some quarters (you know who you are: thank you! :)) I have also, despite being unceasingly polite, received a significant amount of abuse, kick-back and have been blocked from several online detecting groups where my work has been posted.

I have also seen and heard some of the worst stories regarding our shared portable heritage: of coin hoards being shovelled into washing-up bowls, disclaimed Treasure being sold and altered, lead and other metals being melted down and sold for scrap, disclaimed Treasure being melted down or made into jewellery, etc, etc, etc.

In short, it's a grim world for an archaeologist out there in detecting land and, being honest, I think I've seen enough. The world is bad enough right now and, for the preservation of my sanity, I need to do something else for a bit.

However, before I go, I need to put on record some recent interactions with DCMS that I have had regarding the FOI I submitted late last year, and which [I detailed in an earlier blog](#).

Following the replies to my FOI requests of November 2025, on 27th February 2026 I received a further email from DCMS:

'Previous to your FOI request that you submitted to the department last year, we have subsequently discovered that there was an error in calculating the figures, which led to an incorrect figure being provided in our response. The figure for the year 2024 to 2025 : £6,627,777.50 was incorrect and sent in error. The actual figure for the year 2024 to 2025 is the following: £4,477,777.50.'

This figure was some £2.15 million less than originally claimed.

I, of course, asked how such an error had been made and in an email today (10th March 2026) I have received an answer:

'The £2,150,000 refers to a single reward payment, made to an interested party in one treasure case. The bank returned the initial payment to DCMS, which then successfully paid out the reward again. The payment was therefore recorded twice, although only one payment of £2,150,000 was actually made. This was then misread as two separate payments, which resulted in incorrect information being sent to you.'

Although I do see how such an understandable mistake can be made, unfortunately, these figures leave an even bigger unexplained - and significant - discrepancy between the totals of rewards recommended in the Treasure Valuation Committee minutes and the BM & DCMS actual amounts paid out in rewards as detailed in their FOI responses:

Totals from TVC minutes = £14,621,000 being,

- 2020: £150,000
- 2021: £998,000
- 2022: £2,016,000
- 2023: £7,172,000
- 2024: £4,285,000

Totals from DCMS & BM combined = £7,047,382.91 being,

- 2020/2021 £170,713
- 2021/2022 £188,251.35
- 2022/2023 £1,236,969.61
- 2023/2024 £321,126.99
- 2024/2025 £7,280,321.96 (now minus £2.15 million, so actually £5,130,321.96)

Even allowing for errors in my very much 'back of the fag packet' adding up of TVC minute amounts, or the fact that some recommended rewards may have been rejected/disclaimed by the finders/landowners before payment, and that the accounting years are slightly different or that rewards may have been paid in a different year to that in which they were recommended, over the five years these are hugely different numbers with only half of the rewards apparently being paid compared to those that were recommended.

So what does this mean?

I'll be honest in saying I really have no idea, but if it's anything like the rest of this underfunded, under-resourced and opaque - some might even say, secret - system, I really wouldn't be surprised by anything that turns up in future...

So, on that note, that's me signing out from detecting research. At least we tried, eh?

I'll see you all back in torc and Harry Price land. :)