

## BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

### 1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

Statistical release for Reported Treasure Finds, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, in 2013 and 2014.

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/treasure-and-portable-antiquities-statistics>)

Name of Producer Organisation

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

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### 2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2: Release practices - Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation

Practice 7: Subject to compliance with the rules and principles on pre-release access set out in legislation, limit access before public release to those people essential for production and publication, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Publish records of those who have access prior to release.

Date of occurrence

3 November 2015

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

The Reported Treasure Finds statistical release is produced within a policy team with oversight from a statistician. The individual leading the release on behalf the policy team was new to the team and not fully aware of the requirements of the Code of Practice. They sent an email including the release to colleagues on the pre-release access list (excluding

ministers and their private offices) at 15:11 on 3 November 2015, two days before the publication was due to be released which was 9.30 on 5 November 2015 (i.e. the afternoon before the pre-release access period).

The only person receiving the email not involved in production was a member of the press and communications team. The error was immediately noticed and the Head of Profession spoke to the communications team member before she had seen the email. This colleague did not read or open the email and assured the lead statistician that the email or contents would not be viewed or shared with any individuals.

The publication lead was then reminded of the requirements of the Code of Practice.

#### Reasons for breach

Human error occurred due to a lack of clarification on the Code of Practice to the policy lead.

### **3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)**

The impact of the breach was minimal as no additional people actually saw the release in advance of publication.

### **4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)**

The Head of Statistics has reminded all statistics colleagues to make sure all policy colleagues who lead on statistics releases are fully aware of the Code of Practice when handling pre-release access material.

An email has been sent to all individuals in DCMS with pre-release access or involvement in production to remind them of the requirements and what that means for individuals.

### **5. Links to published statements about this breach**