

June 2021

# Issues regarding metal detecting in Iceland. The heritage management point of view.



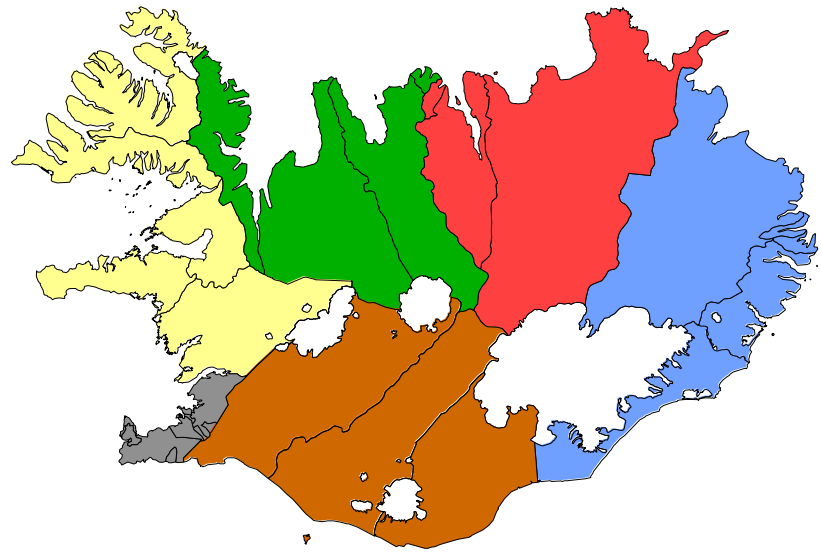
The Cultural  
Heritage Agency  
of Iceland

Agnes Stefánsdóttir

Head of Department of Research and Dissemination

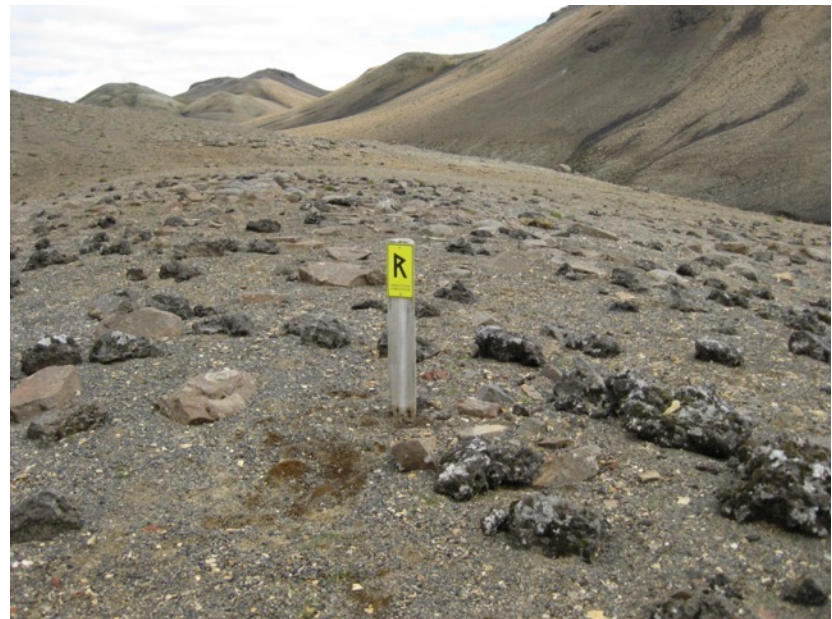
# The Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland

- oversees the protection of Icelandic archaeological and built heritage according the Act on Cultural Heritage no. 80/2012.
- within the remit of the Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Climate (from 1 feb. 2022)
- monitors and grants permissions for the export of cultural valuables to other countries
- responsible for the implementation of the Act on the return of cultural objects to other countries no. 57/2011.



# Law on cultural heritage nr. 80/2012

- Built heritage
- Archaeological heritage
  - 100 years and older



# Law on cultural heritage nr. 80/2012

## Archaeological heritage

- Archaeological sites
  - Manmade or that man has made his mark on
  - Permit needed for all excavations
- Archaeological artefacts
  - Found in excavations
  - Loose finds



# Protected vs. listed sites

- Protected sites
  - 15 m buffer zone
  - Automatic at 100 years
  - CHA can lift protection
- Listed sites
  - 100 m buffer zone
  - CHA sends proposal to minister
  - Minister decides on listing
  - Only minister can lift protection





# Law on cultural heritage nr. 80/2012

## Permits for Archaeological excavations

- A permit is needed for all ground disturbing archaeological research.
- The project manager has to have a degree in archaeology and meet the conditions made by the Cultural Heritage Agency.
- The Cultural Heritage Agency sets the regulations for ground disturbing archaeological research. In the regulation the conditions for permits should be set as well as for the education of participants and the delivery of the archaeological archive.
- The regulations should also give directions on reporting as well as the condition of/ how to leave the site after excavations.



# Archaeological artefacts found by chance

- Must be reported to the CHA
- Must not be moved unless absolutely necessary
- All finds are the property of the State
- Must be delivered to the National Museum
- Payment for expenses
- Payment for precious metals and stones

# Metal detecting

- The previous law (2001):
  - The use of metal detectors or other equipment may not be used in the search for archaeological artefacts in the ground except with special permission.
- The current law (2012) says:
  - absolutely nothing about metal detectors



# What is a cultural heritage crime?

- Permitting construction on areas that have not been inventoried
- Permitting construction on or near known protected archaeological sites without permission from the Agency
- **Destroy, change, cover or move protected archaeological sites without permission**
- Construction within the 100 m buffer zone of listed archaeological sites without permission
- Erecting signs by or on protected sites without permission
- **Not notifying the Agency of previously unknown archaeological sites**
- **Not notifying the Agency of archaeological artefacts found on or in the ground**
- **Removing such artefacts unless it necessary to prevent their destruction**
- Changing, tearing down or moving protected buildings without permission
- Exporting cultural object that have been classified as national treasure without permission
- Exporting other cultural object as listed in art. 45 of the Act on Cultural Heritage

# Penalties

**Violation of the law is subject to fines unless there is a more severe punishment according to Article 177 of the General Penal Code**

## **The General Penal Code no 19/190**

**Art. 177** Any person who removes, destroys or damages public monuments or objects intended for public use or for decoration, or objects that are part of public museums or are specially protected, shall be sentenced to prison for up to 3 years, or to a fine if there are extenuating circumstances.

# What is actually happening

Archaeologists

- Not really using metal detectors

Amateur metal detectorists

- Do not seem to be common

But.... **Costco**



# Iceland – a metal detectorists nightmare?

Little or no ploughing  
Sheep farmers





# Iceland – a metal detectorists nightmare?



Volcanoes

- high natural metal inclusion in ground (iron)



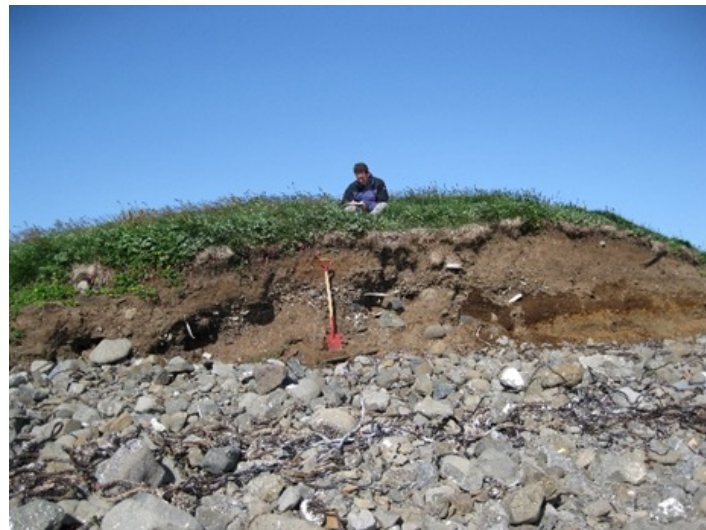
# Iceland – a metal detectorists nightmare?

Lowland around the coast

- Occupation – farms from 9th C onwards
- Soil accumulation

Highland

- Large area with little or no occupation
- Erosion



# To sum up

- You can use metal detectors in Iceland
- You can not dig in an archaeological site (known or unknown)
- You should not remove artefacts found in or on the ground

News > World > Europe

## 1,000-year-old Viking sword unearthed by Icelandic goose hunters

One of the hunters said the weapon was 'just lying there on the ground, waiting to be picked up'

Gabriel Samuëls | @gabs\_samuëls | Thursday 8 September 2016 12:09 BST | [comment](#)



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The group of five hunters with the rare preserved sword they found in Skaftárhreppur, south Iceland. The Cultural Agency of Iceland

A well-preserved **Viking** sword thought to be over 1,000-years-old has been unexpectedly unearthed by a group of men on a goose hunting trip in **Iceland**.

