

4 March 2026

## **Re: Support for Unite the Union's Application for a Sectoral Employment Order for Non-Licensed Archaeological Workers**

Dear Members of the Labour Court,

AMS Cultural Heritage Consultancy Limited, trading as Archaeological Management Solutions (AMS), welcomes the opportunity to provide this letter of support in relation to Unite the Union's application under the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 for the establishment of a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) for non-licensed Archaeological Workers in the Commercial Archaeology Sector.

### **1. AMS and Our Role in the Sector**

AMS is one of Ireland's leading archaeological consultancies, employing a significant number of archaeologists across a range of project types and services including excavation, monitoring, assessment, survey, post-excavation analysis, and consultancy. Our work is carried out within the regulatory frameworks of the National Monuments Acts 1930–2014, the Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023, the Planning and Development Acts, and associated national policies, guidelines and codes of practice.

As a major employer in the sector, we have a direct interest in ensuring that archaeological work in Ireland is carried out to the highest professional standards and that the workforce is stable, skilled, and adequately supported.

### **2. The Need for an SEO**

AMS supports the establishment of an SEO for non-licensed Archaeological Workers for the following reasons:

- **Recruitment and Retention Challenges:** The sector has experienced increasing difficulty attracting and retaining skilled Site Archaeologists, Site Supervisors, and specialist staff. These roles form the backbone of archaeological fieldwork and are essential to meeting statutory obligations and project timelines.
- **Precarity and Inconsistent Pay Structures:** Non-licensed Archaeological Workers often face short-term contracts, variable hours, and inconsistent pay rates across

employers. This undermines workforce stability and contributes to the loss of experienced personnel to other sectors.

- **Impact on Project Delivery and Heritage Protection:** A stable, experienced workforce is essential for meeting planning-related archaeological requirements, including ensuring compliance with planning conditions, licence conditions, and safeguarding Ireland's archaeological heritage. High turnover and labour shortages increase project risk and compromise quality.
- **Professionalisation of the Sector:** Archaeology is a regulated profession in Ireland and several other EU/EEA states. Establishing a minimum rate of pay through an SEO would bring the sector more in line with other regulated professions and support the long-term sustainability of archaeological practice.

### 3. Support for the Proposed Minimum Rate

AMS supports Unite's proposal for a **minimum hourly rate of €22.50** for non-licensed Archaeological Workers. In our view, this rate:

- reflects the advanced level of skill, academic qualifications (typically a degree in archaeology, and in practice most professionals hold a postgraduate degree), on-site training, experience, professional judgment, and responsibility necessary for these roles;
- is necessary to ensure the sector remains competitive in attracting new entrants;
- supports the retention of experienced staff whose expertise is essential for high-quality archaeological work and service delivery; and
- provides a fair and consistent baseline across the industry.

We also support the request that the Labour Court consider inflationary impacts over the lifetime of the SEO to ensure that the minimum rate remains meaningful and effective.

### 4. Implementation Considerations

AMS wishes to highlight two practical considerations that we believe should be addressed within the SEO framework:

- **Student Archaeological Workers:** Students undertaking supervised archaeological fieldwork (e.g., during university summer breaks) constitute a distinct cohort whose participation is primarily for training and professional development. We therefore suggest that the Labour Court consider establishing a **separate, appropriate rate for**



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**student workers**, reflecting the developmental nature of these roles while ensuring fair and transparent treatment across the sector.

- **Lead-in Time for Implementation:** Should the proposed minimum rate of €22.50 per hour be adopted, AMS respectfully requests that the SEO include a **defined lead-in period** before the new rate becomes mandatory. This would allow employers like us to complete ongoing projects as tendered within existing cost structures and to provide clients with clear notice of when revised rates will apply. A scheduled commencement date would support orderly implementation and minimise disruption to active archaeological programmes.

Overall, AMS believes that a Sectoral Employment Order will contribute significantly and in a positive way to the stability, professionalism, and sustainability of the Commercial Archaeology Sector. It will help ensure that Ireland continues to meet its national and international obligations for the protection of archaeological heritage, while supporting a skilled workforce whose contribution is essential to that mission.

We respectfully urge the Labour Court to give full consideration to Unite the Union's application and to recommend the establishment of an SEO for non-licensed Archaeological Workers, incorporating the implementation considerations outlined above.

Yours sincerely,

**Ed Danaher**

Managing Director

**Archaeological Management Solutions (AMS)**