

The Secretary,  
The Labour Court,  
Lansdowne House,  
Lansdowne Road, Dublin 4  
[secretariat@labourcourt.ie](mailto:secretariat@labourcourt.ie)  
04<sup>th</sup> March 2026

## Letter of support for SEO in Archaeology Sector

Dear Secretary,

I own and run a SME archaeological consultancy (37 staff currently, of which 33 are non-licensed) in Dublin. We work with the public and private sectors on consultancy, planning advice, testing, monitoring and excavation, and we have been operating since 2011.

Aggressive competition in the industry has led to unsustainably low pay for non-licensed archaeological staff which has caused problems in my own business and for my clients. Primarily, it is difficult to retain high calibre staff members. Archaeologists require NFQ level 8 and 9 qualifications, particularly for work on state projects but the remuneration does not reflect the time and money invested by archaeologists in their careers. New entrants to the sector are relatively rare as a result.

Most archaeologists need to find employment in other sectors if they want to raise a family, get a mortgage or if they have health problems or disabilities, so the sector has become reliant on young or single people to carry out the day-to-day work of excavation and other construction related tasks. In a way this discriminates against people we would like to see included in the industry.

For my commercial clients, who legally require archaeologists to facilitate the construction of housing, infrastructure, public services and other developments, the lack of field archaeologists leads to programme commencement and completion delays. Essentially, this is a structural problem which ramifications for growth in every other industry, but particularly for the underperforming housing sector. Ironically archaeologists are required for planning applications and construction of houses, but most, especially single people, cannot participate in the housing market.

As a small company I cannot single-handedly raise my own staff wages far above the national average of €17.40 per hour for non-licensed archaeologists, as the vast majority of our tenders for government projects and private clients are given on the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT), which are usually articulated as hourly rates for non-licensed archaeological workers. I have tried to raise wages where possible but at a constant risk of losing work to competitors who are paying low wages to archaeologists.

I believe that base pay for a commercial archaeologist should begin at €22.50 per hour. At this rate, commercial archaeology could attract and retain workers, and workers would be able to consider staying in the sector with families, mortgages and health issues. This would be an enormous benefit to the sector as a whole because talent could be retained, and investment in training and qualification would be encouraged.

I spoke with my own staff on this subject two days ago, and they told me that the existing extremely low pay rates for commercial archaeology are completely incompatible with having a family. This is not sustainable, and it is clear that the existing business model has completely failed over the past 30 years to deal with this issue. For this reason, I fully support the SEO.

Kind regards,

Antoine Giacometti

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