



UCD School of Archaeology,
University College Dublin,
Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland

T +353 1 716 8312
F +353 1 7161184

Scoil na Seandálaíochta UCD,
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath,
Belfield, Baile Átha Cliath 4, Eire

archaeology@ucd.ie
www.ucd.ie/archaeology

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Re. A Sectoral Employment Order for the Commercial Archaeology Sector

To whom it may concern,

I write as Head of UCD School of Archaeology to provide a letter of support for Unite the Union's application for a Sectoral Employment Order in the commercial archaeology sector.

UCD School of Archaeology is the leading archaeological department in Ireland, ranked in the world's top 100. UCD School of Archaeology is the largest provider of archaeological education and training in Ireland and we have a keen interest in the working conditions and employment standards of the profession which many of our students enter.

The commercial archaeology sector in particular is closely tied to infrastructural development in Ireland, and housing, gas pipeline, and motorways are vital to our current and future economic development. Archaeology also contributes significantly to Ireland's national identity and cultural heritage. Beyond the inherent value of cultural heritage, it is widely recognised as having a significant role in driving tourism and as of economic benefit. It is evident then that Ireland needs to have the sectoral capacity to provide high quality archaeological advice and intervention in the context of the delivery of infrastructural or commercial developments.

Since the massive loss of knowledge and personnel following the last recession the sector has experienced a shortfall in both graduates and experienced personnel, something which can and will affect the delivery of vital construction projects such as housing and the Dublin Metro.

The proposed wage rate of €22.50 is both fair and sustainable. It will create a level playing field for archaeological companies to tender on and it will also encourage retention of existing staff and new graduates, whilst hopefully encouraging more students to enter the profession. Additionally, the granting of that rate would help to prevent any industrial action in the commercial archaeology sector, which saw pickets on the N22 Macroom bypass and strikes on sites in Dublin City Centre and North Dublin in the last decade.

Archaeology graduates from Irish universities are highly skilled, highly qualified and eminently capable and for them to be properly and fairly remunerated in their chosen profession is a must. The granting of the SEO would be hugely positive for the profession, for its staff, staffing levels and productivity, something which can only be beneficial for not only all of those involved, but also our heritage and the country as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Aidan O'Sullivan

Professor Aidan O'Sullivan, MIAI, MRIA,
FSA, Head of UCD School of Archaeology
College of Social Sciences and Law,
Newman Building, UCD, Belfield, Dublin 4