

To whom it may concern,

In my capacity as Head of Archaeology at University of Galway (and an archaeologist for over 30 years), I am writing to express my support for the application by the Archaeology branch of Unite the Union for a Sectoral Employment Order in the commercial archaeology sector.

This is a growing sector, one that is integral to Ireland's current and future economic development, being inextricably linked to all infrastructure and related construction projects. The sector is experiencing a problematic shortfall in employees right now, and this will only worsen as demand increases.

The proposed minimum wage rate of €22.50 (and any related sick-pay and pension schemes) is both fair and sustainable. It will encourage more students to study archaeology, and more graduates to enter the profession – and, crucially, stay in it. As someone directly involved in training and educating those future professionals (and working closely with commercial archaeology companies in so doing), strong student numbers allow us to invest and maintain a high standard of qualification, whilst also meeting the demands of the sector.

The proposed rate will also level the playing field somewhat for companies bidding for contracts, with all required to adhere to such an Order. This will avoid inequities and promote good relations between employees and employers – another strong 'pull' factor for our graduates.

This move is long overdue for our profession; pay must reflect the skilled and academically qualified nature of the archaeological workforce – as it does in other sectors. Only then will commercial archaeology be properly staffed and able to fully contribute to improving the efficiency of pre- and early-stage development projects, something the government is obviously very keen to see happen.

Granting this SEO would be a very positive step, one that has the potential to benefit all relevant parties, treating everyone in a fair, equal, and sustainable manner. It is a key component in presenting an archaeological degree and subsequent career as an attractive option to both school-leavers and university graduates – and is essential in retaining qualified professionals within the sector.

Sincerely,

Michelle Comber

Dr. Michelle Comber, MA

Léachtóir | Lecturer

Head of the Discipline of Archaeology

Seandálaíocht, Scoil na Tíreolaíochta, na Seandálaíochta, agus Léann Éireannach,
Coláiste na nDán, na nEolaíochtaí Sóisialta agus an Léinn Cheiltigh

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