Hello to whomever is listening to our desperate plea to be treated like human beings,

I include below a Facebook post regarding this hearing (or whatever you call it) from UCD school of archaeology where I was taught and trained. It will sound more professional than what I have to say after the quotation marks.

“

UCD School of Archaeology support's Unite the Union's application for a Sectoral Employment Order in the commercial archaeology sector.

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.

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.

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.

Aidan O'Sullivan
Head of school.”

On my own personal note as someone who has worked in commercial archaeology since 2021, I and many others need our voices to be heard.

Currently I work on a site where the lazy, obese, uneducated, and untrained gate check in guy earns several euro an hour more than me for sitting in a dry heated cabin, while I dig 4-5 metric tons of earth per day in winter, in the pouring rain (not an exaggeration, a cubic metre of soil is 1 ton, I measured the dimensions of my soil heap with my hand tape). He gets this wage because he has legally defined role while I do not, allowing me to be exploited by anyone who wishes to exploit me.

I spent years studying archaeology to develop the skills required to recognise, excavate and record archaeological features and artefacts. I have 2 level 8 degrees from UCD and work harder than most people alive or dead. Arthritis is developing in my wrists because of the cartilage being worn down from troweling and mattocking, my knees hurt with every step I take and the vertebrae in my back are getting misaligned (again, not an exaggeration, this is coming from a recent medical examination and I'm not even 30 years old). I struggle to pay rent, electricity, and for food. I cannot buy an engagement ring for my partner because I cannot afford it because I have to live in Dublin to work in archaeology. I wake at 5am to commute to work because I cannot afford a car, insurance, or the fuel to run it. I also do not have healthcare cover or private insurance because I cannot afford that either so I can't treat any of my physical problems created by the job I do.

Roads, houses, government offices, etc. cannot be built without our work going ahead first so that we can preserve our people's past. Every single other person on sites, whether they are educated or uneducated, makes drastically more money than we do even though there are very few people who can do what we do. We're not asking for more than anyone else, we're only asking to be treated the same.

Why can't we be treated the same?

Yours sincerely,

One of many broken spirits.