

The Archaeological Profession in Ireland: A Workshop on Future Possibilities

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Facilitated by

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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Cover Photographs:

Kindly provided by James Eogan and Liam Mannix

1. Introduction

Archaeology is a fundamental part of our national heritage. The development of a vibrant and sustainable archaeological profession is essential to interpret and communicate the richness of the archaeological record. Public sector archaeologists, academics and commercial operations are the three core elements of the profession. All have undergone changes due to the turbulent economic and political climate of recent years. This has resulted in unemployment for many and fragmentation of the archaeological sector. While adaptation to this new situation is essential, it is imperative that the archaeological profession survive the recession in a progressive and sustainable manner.

With this in mind, an ‘*Archaeological Profession in Ireland*’ workshop was hosted by the Heritage Council in Kilkenny on Tuesday, 8th March 2011. The aim was to facilitate discussion of issues facing the archaeological profession. Members of the profession were invited to attend on a first come, first served basis.

Through an open forum and four focus groups, attendees worked together in articulating their opinions with a particular emphasis on looking at solutions.

The findings of the workshop are presented in the following pages. It is intended to both document the constructive discussions that took place and to communicate them to a wider audience in the hope of stimulating further progress. The workshop proceedings are reported in this document without significant editing or polishing and should not be seen as representative of any particular organisation.

2. Professional Context

The economic downturn has had a devastating effect on the profession. Huge numbers of archaeologists are now unemployed, working in different sectors, retraining, or have emigrated. Companies have either ceased trading or downsized significantly. The public sector, including the universities, has greatly reduced the number of archaeologists with most temporary contracts being terminated. As a result, expertise, knowledge and corporate memory have been lost.

The numbers working in commercial archaeology increased between 2002 and 2008 by 283% to approximately 1700¹. The current best estimate by the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (IAI) is 350. This represents a significant decline for a highly trained and well-motivated profession. Estimates suggest that in the medium-term a sustainable level of employment is believed to be 500.

Earlier documents as *Archaeology 2020* considered long-term strategic recommendations for archaeology.² Ironically, this document was published in response to the development boom and the associated increase in archaeological excavations. While many of the issues in *Archaeology 2020* remain relevant, the consequences of the rapid contraction of private sector archaeological practices that have taken place since 2008 and the shrinkage in areas of

¹ <http://www.discovering-archaeologists.eu/ireland.html>; Eogan, J. 2010. ‘The impact of the recession on archaeology in the Republic of Ireland’, in Schlanger, N and Aitchison, K. (eds) *Archaeology and the global economic crisis: multiple impacts, possible solutions*, Culture Lab, Belgium, 19-24, <http://www.ace-archaeology.eu/fichiers/25Archaeology-and-the-crisis.pdf>

² *Archaeology 2020: Repositioning Irish Archaeology in the Knowledge Society*, Dublin 2006

employment have yet to be fully addressed. Diminishing numbers of archaeologists, together with financial constraints have created difficulties for the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland

(IAI), in actively advocating archaeology. On a political level, the recent shift from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local government to the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht has yet to play out but could be beneficial.

A realistic and sustainable rejuvenation of the profession is needed. This workshop has acted as a starting point in finding a route to a sustainable future for the profession.³

3. Open Forum

Chair: Ger Mulvey

An independent facilitator with a background in public sector management, Ger was appointed by the Heritage Council to chair the open forum. The forum commenced by identifying current difficulties:

Communication & Engagement

- Need to deal with welfare of archaeologists and the feeling of despair due to ongoing levels of unemployment
- Lack of open discussion as a profession
- Finances prevent access to online forum of IAI for non-members
- IAI will open the online forum to non-members to enable communication between all of the profession
- Follow example of British Jobs and Research Forum as a model for communication
- IAI suggest a lack of engagement and support by the profession.
- IAI suggested as not being representative of archaeology 'on the ground'.
- Membership of the IAI does not have the same cache as other professional bodies in various sectors e.g. architects, surveyors. How does the IAI add value to the sector?

Standardisation

- What is the relevance of IAI in commercial archaeology? For example, re: rating/accreditation of companies and practitioners as per other professions.
- IAI says there is no interest by companies in rating. It can't do all the work and actions on behalf of the profession without support.
- IAI suggested to become a regulatory body
- Regulatory bodies – what can we learn internationally? Is it best long-term that government handle regulation of archaeology?
- Wages – there is no regulation in this area apart from the national minimum wage

³ The original flipcharts from the focus groups were photographed and have kindly been uploaded to Flickr by John Tierney. These can be found at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/21881987@N02/sets/72157626225951266>.

- Where are all the students and skilled archaeologists to be employed? There is a fear by some that graduate students are eager to work for much lower wages
- What are our skills and where are they applicable? How do we assess this?
- What and where are our successes? Publicised failures have gotten far more recognition and leads to a bad reputation in public eyes
- Licensing was the only qualification giving professional recognition. There is a lack of recognition in a formal way for the multitude of skills/specialisations. There is a need to address this with an education strategy.
- What is the way forward for accreditation of skills/ specialisations?

Looking Ahead

- As a relatively new profession, archaeology can benefit as it does not have significant legacy issues
- The sustainability of the environmental archaeological sector needs to be addressed
- Future management of data storage is a pressing issue
 - non-assignment of finance to this area
 - are there long-term plans established e.g. through research projects for digital data
 - do we value this data sufficiently?
- Strength of the sector is that we sit on a huge amount of valuable information. But that is not easily accessible. There are issues to be considered concerning access to reports, copyrights, professional jargon etc.
- Possibly not so hard to resolve these issues if facilities established e.g. national online information network, and more responsibility put on the report writer to create access to reports if the infrastructure is in place.
- Strong need for change and progress. In doing so, it is important to define how we function and who we are

4. Focus Groups

The following are the results of four focus groups which were held on the day. The workshop attendees were divided into four groups, each spending roughly fifteen minutes teasing out each of the four questions. Certain overlap emerged between the focus groups. Issues such as communication, education, funding, local engagement, data management can be seen to re-occur within discussions.

Focus Group 1 - Facilitator: Tracy Collins

How can we ensure that archaeology is a sustainable and vibrant activity?

Communication & Engagement

- Improve media exposure, using positive rather than negative media spin
- Use online media e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Blogs for publicity
- Review and develop communication skills e.g. media training CPD courses
- Archaeological product can be made sustainable by measuring/ monitoring outputs in communication/ publications tools.
- Make more use of popular publications
- The archaeological sector needs to have a stronger voice – both to promote and defend
- Champion/s of archaeology – appropriate celebrity to improve positive associations and perceptions

Education & Training

- Education – use the Department of Education and their resources, engage with schools
- Improve academic engagement and re-assess relevance of current archaeological education
- Policies in education could improve the dissemination of information and may lead to employment e.g. teaching support for delivery of curriculum
- Teach essential business skills in university
- Improve professional co-ordination and networks e.g. data infrastructure
- Career development structure needs to be clearer
- Find new market for transferable skills. Identify them.

Value & Definition

- What is the 'value' of archaeology? E.g. knowledge about ourselves, identity, mental health of the community, a way for local communities to connect
- Communication of archaeology's 'value' is vital – what is it about? A key element in this is engagement with academia and schools in dynamic way, not just using publications.
- Widen definition of what is archaeology and who is it for? It is seen as the study of past societies through material remains? It is heritage, eco/ artefacts etc? It is for the community, public engagement, the profession, tourism?

Professional Perceptions

- It was suggested there is a 'race to the bottom'. Standards are required to steady the profession. Regulation is needed which could lead to a more sustainable archaeological sector
- Decide what kind of archaeology we want?

- Important to be less dependent on developer-funded archaeology
- Lack of collaboration between profession and other disciplines
- Community involvement and voluntary commitment is key to vibrant future
- In terms of strategies, is a local or national mindset preferable?
- Archaeologists need to draw together and comment as a group
- Archaeology has divisions within the profession which are harmful.
- Public support is essential from local communities

Funding

- Rewarding developers to avoid negative attitudes and removal of archaeology e.g. introduction of maintenance fees/ grant, for archaeological sites on land, make archaeology work under CAP
- Look at existing programmes like TUS and learn
- Incentivise the 'developer pays' principle with tax refunds/ rebates for archaeology to encourage maintenance of sites
- Award schemes to encourage archaeology on local level, can also be a positive PR exercise
- REPS Programme – what is the impact of the new scheme?
- A NAMA for archaeology?

Employment Potential

- Sustainable employment is key
- Need for fostering a strong public sector with government regulation. This requires policy documents where archaeological advice and strategies are clearly set out. Currently there is a small archaeological officer network in Local Authorities.
- Data management - 'ghost' archives, digital archives, reports etc. need to be accessed, analysed, standardised and managed. Develop this as a resource.
- Lack of co-ordination of up-to-date archaeological, historical and professionally relevant information between groups – on a local level use the Local Authority Heritage Officer network, museums and libraries.
- Develop the potential of tourism
- New angles for archaeology by 'repackaging' – develop site interpretations, a more social and community led archaeology, centres for data at a county level.

Focus Group II - Facilitator: Finola O'Carroll

How can we best influence government to accord greater priority to our archaeological heritage?

Effective Promotion

- Quantify the economic benefit of archaeology
- Show that we are in the knowledge and national identity business
- Demonstrate the importance of archaeology to Heritage tourism – 80% of tourists classified as cultural tourists
- Linking archaeology with job creation, CES, FÁS

- What exactly are the priorities within archaeology? Address the perception that it is seen as a 'luxury'
- Ally to the arts sector and learn from their successful campaigns. Can it be replicated?
- Ally with related disciplines also e.g. bio-diversity, agriculture
- Establish the cultural dividend
- Archaeological related bodies need to be more media savvy
- Archaeological celebrity/champion needed
- We need critical mass of public support

Archaeological Resource

- Valuing all aspects of heritage and value as a national resource, part of national identity
- Look to best practice in Europe
- New act will improve archaeological policy
- EU legal dimension

Lobbying

- Lobbying government from bottom up and top down
- Chair of IAI is to request a meeting with the Minister
- What do we say? What are we lobbying for? Job creation and heritage value? What do we need to articulate?
- Ensure County Development Plans, LAPs, etc have intelligent and incisive archaeological policies which will be implemented on a county level
- Lobby for archaeology to be on national curriculum
- Keep it local – Councillors, T.D.s etc
- Follow the money

Engagement

- Community engagement and development e.g. local societies
- County Archaeological inventories and the exhibitions provided by the National Museum and local museums have huge potential for communication
- Branch out and create links with wider communities and other groups – locally, inter/ nationally
- Involve stakeholders in local/ national progress e.g. IAI, Heritage Council, DoEHLG, National Monuments Service, NGO's, local societies, etc
- Small size of the profession can work to our benefit
- Address the lack of ambition in vision and standards
- Maximise skills that exist
- Establish a taskforce/advisory group
- Collectively come up with aims and objectives which are sustainable in long-term

Focus Group III – Facilitator: Ian Doyle
SWOT Analysis of the Archaeological Profession

STRENGTHS:	WEAKNESSES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passionate professionals with a diverse, transferable and adaptable skill base • Development of profession and its relevance with other sectors • Profession not over-regulated • Strong legislation • Produce valuable information • Engage in constructive research • Vital to establishing cultural identity • Generally supportive and interested public • Support of related organisations • Archaeology benefits from hyper-local national viewpoint • Richness of archaeology as a collective national resource • Connection with tourism industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak, fractured and under-valued group identity • Ear of government deaf to this small profession? • Low morale and current air of pessimism • Hyper-critical of both ourselves and external factors • Poorly developed public/community archaeology • Lack of public understanding and engagement • Not vocal or visible enough about our achievements • Lack of ambition in vision, standards, etc. • Inadequate communication and collaboration - internally and externally • Lack of structure within profession - no CPD requirements, diversity of backgrounds etc. • Lack of clear career paths • Loss of skilled people • Poor engagement by the IAI but also, with the IAI • Creation of grey literature on large scale and under-development of information sharing, both publicly and professionally • Deficient regulations and implementation of policy • Reliance on developer-led bubble

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Tourism: field schools, tours, heritage interpretation, etc
- Archaeology is infinite and all around us
- Cultural shift, appreciating what is important
- Local, local, local - work on local engagement and identity including local government
- Community and experimental archaeology
- Community led archaeology
- Innovation necessitated by recession can develop new ideas and ways of thinking. Where are gaps?
- Communication - online media and cheap publication
- Development of the IAI
- Improve interdisciplinary collaboration
- Mentoring/internship
- New government, new politics - shape new strategies
- EU regulation to create a sustainable profession
- EU involvement - research and funding
- Research opportunities counter-act 'need to dig'
- Grey literature - think local accessibility
- Funding schemes - LEADER, Heritage Council, cross border, rural development, TUS, 3rd/4th level academic funding

THREATS:

- Financial cuts
- New government and subsequent policies
- Shrinking public sector - regulation, skills, knowledge and policy vacuum
- Lack of resources and funding - e.g. research cuts
- Changing agri-environment policies
- Impact from forestry
- Relevance of archaeology in changing economic, social and political world
- Less value on heritage
- Loss of identity as a people
- Unstructured, small profession
- Increased graduates flooding a crowded, competitive workplace
- Erosion of skill base through emigration and change of profession
- Pressure on work quality
- New government contracts are quite prohibitive for many archaeological companies
- Loss of material and data, including corporate archives with plans, books, artefacts/ecofacts
- Lack of regulation of digital data and inevitable losses or damage to e.g. databases, archaeological resources etc

Focus Group IV – Facilitator: Gabriel Cooney

How to use the archaeological skill base to address heritage tourism and heritage related enterprises?

Archaeology Context in Heritage Tourism

- Archaeology is everywhere and is a national resource
- Target different kinds of tourism – local/overseas
- What is the focus of project/ places?
- Open community eyes to ‘local wonders’
- Explore community excavations
- What can archaeology offer heritage tourism – e.g. identity?
- Archaeology should be incorporated into aspects of daily lives
- Innovate and make archaeology more open e.g. public archaeological projects
- Local volunteers as a way to engage with the community and support sites
- Use local knowledge and re-engage with local archaeology
- The benefits of archaeology to the environment and develop link with tourism
- Improve accessibility to online data for all heritage tourism stakeholders
- Use technology/ digital data with information from reputable sites for up-to-date research to enhance heritage tours
- Ireland is ‘hyper-local’, use it to our advantage
- Tourism Co-Op – involving various stakeholders to engage/ collaborate with each other
- Public profile – think of marketing, customers, communications and engagement.
- Need to make publications accessible and enjoyable to wider public
- Archaeological value needs to be maintained
- Quality control is vital so as integrity of archaeological resource and profession is not lost
- Link archaeology with employment opportunities in heritage tourism

Education

- Professionals need to update skills – possible multi-body responsibility, tap into appropriate disciplines and get IAI to interact with other bodies
- Skills base needs to be relevant to heritage tourism
- Skills in communication should be both verbal and written
- Tap into media – become more innovative in using online media e.g. apps and web sources
- Look at way archaeology is taught – is it still appropriate? Does it need review?
- Need to keep information up-to-date from university level to historical tours
- Interact with other disciplines which also have a tourism focus – e.g. biodiversity
- Develop field schools as a potential ‘middle man’ between professionals and public
- Accreditation for field schools
- Encourage interest through school curriculums

Governance & Structure

- Stakeholders - state authorities, NGO’s etc should go on the journey to re-focus heritage tourism
- Many voices in heritage tourism

- Need leadership & sustainability
- Should the Department lead strategy on this?
- Strong links should be made with relevant government policy and be part of process of new policy making
- Tap into local authority resources
- Need for verifiable material/ databases/ sites on the web to refer to by all stakeholders
- Sources of funding are key – identify available resources and make connections e.g. LEADER, Enterprise Ireland
- Changes and re-focusing needs to keep a long-term perspective

5. Findings

The workshop stimulated enthusiastic and honest discussions on planning a sustainable future for the archaeological profession. A common theme throughout the day was the need to communicate more effectively, both within the profession and in our engagement with the public. More constructive communication and active collaboration, on all levels, became apparent as keys to the success of strengthening the archaeological profession. The profession needs to sell the achievements and contributions that archaeology has made to society. There is also a need to have greater ambition in how archaeology is positioned in public and political perceptions.

At the close of the workshop, questions were raised as to how all these suggestions for future progress were to work and who would implement them.

Suggestions for the Future:

- ✓ National Archaeology Day
- ✓ Conservation & Management Plan for the profession
- ✓ Development agency for archaeology
- ✓ Archaeological funding working group - developing proposals in collaboration with universities, public sector and SME's
- ✓ Annual award schemes to improve standards of excellence and perceptions
- ✓ Identify the most beneficial balance between national and local structures for archaeology – e.g. national/ local museums network, completion and data management of the archaeological inventories/ surveys
- ✓ Investigation of problem solving in other countries

Despite various other recommendations for the future, it was agreed that a document (i.e. this paper) should be the first outcome. This could be used as a basis for further discussion and as a means to involve others in the debate.

Ultimately, however, an Archaeological Strategy Plan was identified as the best route forward. A working committee was suggested to complete this and a number of attendees at the workshop (both IAI members and non-members) have volunteered to compile the plan. The first meeting of the Archaeological Strategy Plan Working Committee took place at the IAI AGM on the 2nd April 2011 in Dublin. The details of the compilation process are being confirmed by mid-April. The final document is to be completed by October 2011. The plan is to be as inclusive and representative as possible and aim to

formulate a coherent reference point on behalf of the profession. It is envisaged as a tool for lobbying and will look at potential funding, training and employment options.

Consideration on these issues can be further developed during the drafting of the proposed strategy plan. Ultimately the drafting of the proposed strategy is a matter for the profession and the IAI, however, in conclusion, the Heritage Council offered to assist the continuation of the workshop process by facilitating another meeting.

Appendix I: List of Attendees

	Name	Representative body
1	Aidan Harte	IAI
2	Dr Brian Lacey	Discovery Programme
3	Chris Read	IT Sligo
4	Christine Baker	IAI
5	Ciara Brett	Local Authority
6	Claire Cotter	Discovery Programme
7	Conor Newman	Heritage Council
8	Dave Pollock	Private Sector
9	Dominic Delany & Associates	Private Sector
10	Dr Daniel Tietzsch Tyler	Private Sector
11	Dr Eoin Sullivan	Gort Archaeology
12	Dr Meriel McClatchie.	Queens University Belfast
13	Dr Eileen Reilly	MIAI
14	Finn Delaney	Eachtra
15	Finola O'Carroll	IAI/ Private Sector
16	Frank Coyne	Director Aegis Archaeology Ltd
17	Prof Gabriel Cooney	UCD
18	Ger Mulvey	Retired Accountant
19	Gertie Keane	Unemployed Archaeologist
20	Grace Fagan	Private Sector
21	Ian Doyle	Heritage Council
22	Jacinta Kiely	Eachtra
23	James Eogan	NRA/IAI
24	Joanne O'Meadhra.	Local Authority
25	John Tierney	Eachtra
26	Jon Stirland	Newry & Mourne District Council
27	Liam Scott	Heritage Council
28	Lisa Courtney	Courtney Deery Heritage Consultancy
29	Marcin Karczewski	Private Sector
30	Mary Teehan	Heritage Council
31	Mícheál O Droma	Freelance Architect
32	Palo Ciuchini	UCD
33	Patrick Neary	Private Sector
34	Paul Gosling	GMIT
35	Paul Stevens	Private Sector
36	Paul Walsh	Dept of Environment
37	Rob Lynch	Private Sector
38	Ros O Maolduin	NUI
39	Ruth Johnson	Local Authority
40	Sean Shanahan	Private Sector
41	Shiela Lane	IAI
42	Siobhan Deery	Courtney Deery Heritage Consultancy
43	Siobhán McDermott	Private Sector

44	Stephen Mandel	Private Sector
45	Tracy Collins	Private Sector
	Liam Mannix	Heritage Council

Note - Names highlighted in white were unable to attend on the day