

## Public Statement

### *The Archaeological Profession in 2008*

27 June 2008

The Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (IAI) recognises that the new economic climate presents challenges to the profession.

Growth and development in the Irish economy over the last ten years gave rise to an exponential level of growth within the archaeological profession. A profile of the profession undertaken by the Institute in 2002 identified c. 650 qualified archaeologists working in Ireland across all sectors of the profession, with projected growth within the sector estimated at a maximum of 1,100 archaeologists employed by 2007 (i.e. 200% growth).

In reality figures compiled in a 2007 survey estimate that approx. 1700+ archaeologists were employed in Ireland, representing a growth rate of 300%, far in excess of the maximum projected in 2002.

The growth and expansion largely occurred within the contracting sector (archaeological excavation), accounting for 86% of those employed, driven by the NDP and roads infrastructure in particular.

While the profession has developed and matured over this period, with diversification into areas such as heritage management, strategic planning, development control, tourism and research, the 2007 figures represent a peak of activity for the profession and the current downturn in the economy presents a significant challenge; archaeology is not unique in this regard.

Accepting that job losses are likely to be inevitable, as the intense phase of fieldwork programmes linked to the NDP has moderated significantly, it is too early to predict what the full impact will be and how the profession, as a whole, will adjust. Significant large scale projects are still scheduled under the NDP 2007-2013. However, the completed excavations have given rise to a huge requirement for analysis of the results, the preparation for reports, for public presentation and publication, and this will be an important focus for the profession in the short to medium term.

Archaeology has already entered into a period of consolidation, informed by the cross-sector dialogue which had been on-going over the last five years. IAI played an important role in this. Current developments include the state-sponsored Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research Programme (INSTAR) and a Ministerial Review of legislation, policy and practice (Dept. of Environment Heritage and Local Government).

For the present, and into an uncertain future, IAI will remain a forum for discourse, active review and professional guidance.

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### **Background References**

Institute of Archaeologist of Ireland: [www.iai.ie](http://www.iai.ie)

Profiles of the Profession: [www.iai.ie/publications.html#Reports](http://www.iai.ie/publications.html#Reports)

Discovering the Archaeologists of Europe: <http://www.discovering-archaeologists.eu/>

Discovering the Archaeologists of Europe-Ireland, WAC 6 presentation:

[http://www.wac6.org/livesite/posters/poster\\_files/WAC\\_180\\_McDermott\\_La\\_Piscopia.pdf](http://www.wac6.org/livesite/posters/poster_files/WAC_180_McDermott_La_Piscopia.pdf)