



# Strategic Consultation

## Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland Annual Conference

River Lee Hotel, Cork  
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Facilitator: Tina O'Dwyer  
[www.thetourismspace.com](http://www.thetourismspace.com)



## PART 1 OVERVIEW

### Purpose

The Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (IAI) is responsible for preparing a three-year strategic plan for the Institute. As part of the annual conference, the current Board arranged an independently facilitated session designed to obtain the input of members on a number of key questions. Using this input, the Board wishes to formulate short-term and long-term objectives to address these questions and guide the future development of the IAI and the profession itself.

### Desired Outcomes

- A documented record of member views and sentiment on a number of key topics.
- Member direction on the outcomes that should define the three-year plan for the IAI.
- A focus on the items that members care about most and that the IAI can actually have an impact on.
- Direction on the vision that should drive IAI activity over the coming three-year period.

### Context for the facilitated workshop

In advance of the workshop, the assembly heard a number of presentations covering a wide range of topics. Some were representatives of key stakeholder organisations while others represented 'Voices of the Archaeological Profession'. When asked to consider all the presentations in light of the coming three-year period for the IAI and to identify the key themes that stood out for them, the following picture emerged:



Three key questions had been identified in advance of the conference and, based on this wordmap, it was decided to proceed with those questions, namely:

1. What are the key elements to include in the definition of an archaeologist?
2. Independent standards are required for the practice of archaeology in Ireland. Should the IAI be responsible for setting those standards?
3. What position should the IAI take on professional remuneration for Archaeologists:
  - a. Should the IAI support the right of employees to be members of the union?
  - b. Should the IAI actively encourage professional members to engage with the union?

Attendees divided into tables of approximately eight people. The table groups discussed each question in turn. After each question, the outcomes of the round-table conversations were discussed in open-floor format and the key points of agreement from the room were noted by the facilitator. Live conference interaction software was employed to capture room sentiment and to allow members to vote on certain questions – these are displayed in graphic format in this report in the way that they were available to the attendees during the discussions.

The outcomes of discussions are presented in Part 2 below.

## PART 2 OUTCOMES OF DISCUSSIONS

### Question 1: What are the key elements to include in the definition of an archaeologist?

The groups did not seek to create an actual definition, rather to identify the key elements that needed to be considered when preparing a definition. The following key concepts emerged across all groups:

An Archaeologist:

- holds a validated qualification
- employs a professional/systematic methodology
- engages in continuous professional development
- has experience on a number of different levels: with client, in the field and educational.
- Observes standards

An Archaeologist fulfills a number of roles, including:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| ○ Advocate             | ○ Contributor to Sustainable Development              |
| ○ Facilitator          | ○ Interpreter of material culture (and past culture?) |
| ○ Disseminator         | ○ Excavator   |
| ○ Researcher           | ○ Detective (cold case from the human past)           |
| ○ Creator of Knowledge | ○ Project Manager                                     |
| ○ Educator             |   |
| ○ Storyteller          |   |
| ○ Heritage Manager     |   |
| ○ Policy Influencer    |   |

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Distinguish between the legal definition and the professional definition.
- Reference a definition for 'archaeology'.
- Maintain flexibility in the type of experience that qualifies.
- Look at competencies (linked to accreditation) and learning outcomes.
- Consider training in methodologies and the combination of methodologies and approaches.
- Align with European definitions.
- Academic-based profession and not vocationally-based (unlike UK).
- Consider form of accreditation – degree/diploma.
- Cannot forget those who work in the professions who are not academically 'trained'.
- Grading required to undertake specific tasks.

## Question 2: Independent standards are required for the practice of archaeology in Ireland. Should the IAI be responsible for setting those standards?



In response to the direct question, the membership was split in its view as to whether the IAI should be responsible for setting standards, as indicated in the above bar-chart. The reasons given for either 'Yes' or 'No' are contained in the table below.

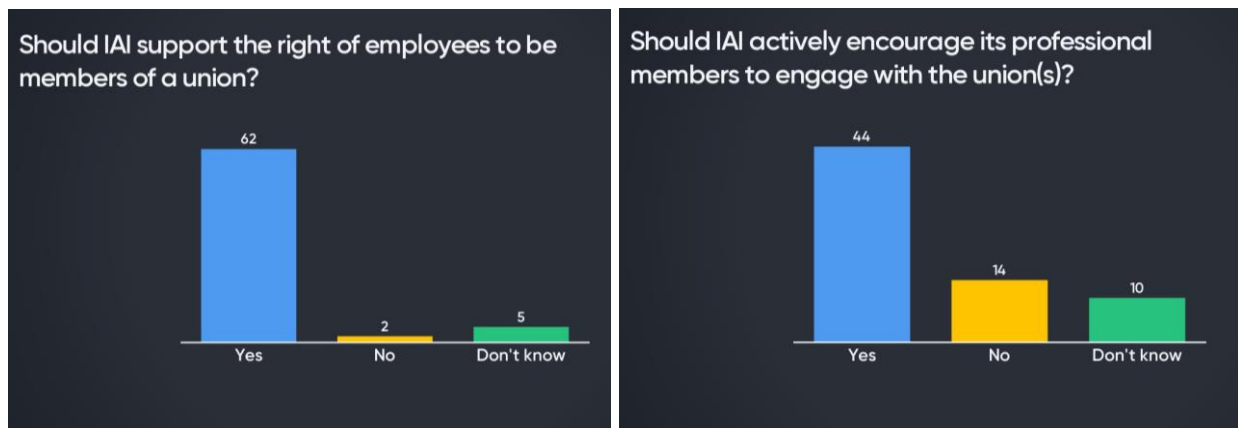
The open-floor discussion, however, revealed that there was general consensus on a number of key points. This discussion concluded that the IAI needed to be involved in the setting of standards, working collaboratively and respectfully with state agencies and relevant stakeholder groups. There was majority support for the idea that the IAI should take a proactive role in ensuring standards are set and should act as facilitator of the process. The overall sentiment was that the IAI should not have responsibility for policymaking or enforcing standards, once set.

| Yes  | No   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, in a collaborative approach that includes specialists, clients and State.</li> <li>- IAI could be funded to set the standards.</li> <li>- The IAI can help to facilitate various standards to ensure members comply with best practice.</li> <li>- The IAI should take the lead and adopt a facilitative role to ensure discussion with relevant stakeholders takes place. Implementation is a separate thing and requires an independent body.</li> <li>- If IAI is to have credibility, it must operate within a standards framework.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IAI is a voluntary body, with limited resources representing all elements of archaeology – the task is simply too big. Create a Code of Conduct instead?</li> <li>- The Board changes and so consistency would be difficult to achieve.</li> <li>- Standard should be set and enforced by government body e.g. NMS/NMI</li> <li>- Enforcement is crucial and IAI is not in a position to carry out that role. Only a statutory body can do that.</li> <li>- Self-regulation is problematic and may lack credibility.</li> </ul> |

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Aim for a profession that is supported by a Standards Authority.
- Build on existing standards of other bodies e.g. TII, CIFA, IPCRA. Can these standards apply?
- Grading of monuments is an important consideration in the discussion.
- Standards of Practice and Conduct need to be established and agreed between IAI and NMS.
- Everything cascades from policy downwards – get the policy right.
- Future-proof the standards – ensure they are independent of people who move on.
- Standards allow regulation of work practices.
- State agencies must adopt the standards also.
- Standards must be documented.
- Standards based on partnership can be achieved with collegiality and respect.
- IAI could produce guidelines for external assessment and agreement.
- IAI can strengthen standards and fulfill a role in terms of CPD/Workshops/Guidelines
- Standards should apply whether a member of the IAI or not.
- IAI could create best practice documents or guidelines, but not set national standards.
- Licensing conditions could reference the standards.
- Flexibility will still be needed.
- “Independent” standards is an incorrect concept – opt instead for national or global standards.

### Question 3. What position should the Institute of Archaeologists take on professional remuneration for archaeologists in the private sector?



The outcome of the vote was emphatic in terms of the IAI supporting the right of employees to be members of a union. While less emphatic, a large majority of those present felt that the IAI should actively encourage its professional members to engage with the unions. Those in favour of having the IAI not adopting a formal position advocated that the IAI stay non-political and remains representative of all members.

Those in favour of the IAI taking a supportive position advocated that this was essential for the future of the profession itself. (This prompted the question as to whether the IAI's primary responsibility was to its members or to the profession in general – a question that may need to be defined by the IAI in the future.)

The open-floor discussion yielded the following suggestions on the question of pay in particular:

- Create guidelines for the self-employed.
- Identify minima.
- Create scales rather than pay rates.
- Consider pay in line with standards – if credible standards exist, the profession becomes more valued.
- Be cognisant that any guidelines for pay will impact on requests for tender.

