

Association of Young Irish Archaeologists

Minutes for Archaeology 2025 – Recommendations Discussion

- The discussion convened at 15.40 on Saturday, 21 April 2018, during the AYIIA Annual Conference (20-22 April) held at NUI Galway.
- The discussion was led by Conference Organiser Chelsea Ryan.
- Attendees: 17
- Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) Represented: National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), University College Dublin (UCD), University College Cork (UCC), Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) & Institute of Technology, Sligo (ITS).

1	<p>Opening Remarks by CR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read through of A2025 PowerPoint • Asked attendees to see strategy pamphlets: Pages 1, 64-69 of ‘Archaeology 2025: Strategic pathways for archaeology in Ireland’ were included in conference packets. • Original itinerary was for the attendees to spend a few minutes of solo reflection on the recommendations under the individual pillars, followed by a group discussion. • Attendees were instructed to focus on recommendations they believed were most relevant or concerning for the AYIA.
2	<p>Comments - Pillar 1: Delivering Archaeology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendations lack a focus on community involvement (it was noted that community is more heavily focused on in other Pillars). • The protection, preservation and management of religious institutions was questioned. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin doesn’t receive financial support from the government as it is an active religious institution, but it also doesn’t receive any heritage support. With a 5th century origin, is it right that this archaeological and historical site is left to protect, preserve, and manage itself without heritage support or guidance?
3	<p>To streamline discussion, attendees were encouraged to go over the remaining recommendations under Pillars 2-6 with those around them, before highlighting main points in the group discussion. The following represent the main points that were brought up, not all are associated with specific pillars or recommendations.</p>

4	<p>Comments – Pillar 4: Expanding Research Horizons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeology 2025 should include supports for new graduates of archaeological disciplines to be able to engage in heritage sector jobs, as well as building up the heritage sector in general. • The absence of many commercial, professional or academic-based roles provide very limited avenues to new graduates, and those that do receive employment in those sectors are on limited contracts and without security. • A strong heritage sector, with a broad regional basis, will result in increases in tourist numbers, increased employment among graduates, a continued enthusiasm in the discipline, and may encourage greater admissions to third-level institutions for the discipline as a result.
5	<p>Comments - Pillar 5: Developing Education and Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be a higher focus on the administration and teaching of archaeological skills at HEIs. • To graduate with an archaeology degree, students should need to pass a ‘standardised skill test’ – something like a field work license. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The field work license should be equivalent to/fulfil the ‘5 years of experience’ requirement often needed for an entry level position. ○ Individuals who work in the archaeological field but do not hold a degree should also be required to pass the skill test. ○ This will create a base standard for credentials and ensure a certain quality of work in all sectors of archaeology. • Certifications such as SafePass and Manual Handling should be included as options during degree work, as recent graduates not be able to afford further training – while consultancies may pay for this training, it is more attractive to employers when the certifications are already held.
6	<p>Comments – Pillar 2: Sustainable Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As commercial archaeologists must obtain a SafePass and undergo Manual Handling training, could we push for developers and construction workers, etc. to take a basic course in archaeological requirements on a site? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This would foster understanding and communication between parties that can often be at odds with each other. • There’s a need to review the gradation of pay levels based on experience of technicians and site assistants. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was noted that individuals with years of experience were not paid much better than the entry-level positions. • Concerns over current working conditions of commercial archaeologists were expressed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, toilet and sanitation facilities on sites prior to the arrival of construction crews for the use of the archaeologists.

7	<p>Comments – Pillar 6: Maximising Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with communities is a must and it's extremely important to involve the public with archaeological projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The AYIA Conference highlighted several projects where communities were eager to assist in research work, with little incentive.
8	<p>Comments on a network of HEIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While a network of HEIs is an excellent idea, faculty don't necessarily have the time to commit towards the creation and maintaining of such a network. • With proper support, the AYIA could serve as this network. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This idea would need a substantial amount of time to be developed and implemented properly, but students and 'young' archaeologists will be more eager and have more time to focus on this collaboration. ○ The AYIA, however, will need larger support from the HEIs for this network to exist. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This support could include the promotion of the AYIA conference, attending the conference, and encouraging students to participate in the AYIA. ▪ It should be easier for HEI faculties to support their own students' involvement with the AYIA than it is for them to build and maintain their own cohesive network.