



Institute of
Archaeologists of
Ireland

63 Merrion Square
Dublin 2
353 01 662 9517
Email: iaireland@eircom.net
www.iai.ie

Editor
The Irish Times
The Irish Times Building
PO Box 74
24-8 Tara Street
Dublin 2

BY E-MAIL

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Madam

Further to the article in Tuesday's Irish Times (12-6-2007) entitled 'Expert's Monumental Error Leaves Builder Stony-faced', the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (IAI), while not requested by the parties involved to respond to the article, feels it should question its presumptions.

Archaeological investigations, including archaeological excavation, are part of the planning process and are legislated for in the National Monuments Acts and the Local Government (Planning & Development) Acts. Archaeological conditions are included in planning decisions in order to protect our cultural heritage and to ensure that archaeological sites are recorded in the event that they are to be removed and destroyed by development. A large distinctive stone, associated with traces of burning, could well form part of a megalithic tomb. Failure to investigate such a feature, as required by the planning conditions, would be akin to the Gardai to walking away from a suspicious death.

The IAI Board expects that, as with normal professional practice, the rates, the scope of the work and the timeframe required would have been agreed in advance of the execution of the work.

All archaeological excavations, like that at Ballybofey, are licensed by the Dept. of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and are conducted strictly in accordance with a method statement, which has to be approved, prior to the permission to proceed being granted. The preparation of a report is obligatory and forms part of planning compliance documentation. The procedures are fully explained in a leaflet entitled 'Archaeology in the Planning Process' produced by the Dept. in February 2007. If the developer has a complaint in relation to standards or the competence of an excavation, it should be referred to the National Monuments Section at the Dept.

Yours Sincerely

Teresa Bolger
Public Relations Officer