

Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations

Monday, 4th December 2017, from 1.15 pm to 3.00 pm
Room 308, Department of the Taoiseach

Minutes

Attendees:

Dr Maurice Manning (Chair)
Professor Mary Daly
Mr Gabriel Doherty
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter
Professor Patrick Geoghegan
Dr Mary Harris
Ms Sinead McCoole
Professor Eunan O'Halpin
Dr Éamon Phoenix
Mr Jerry Kelleher (D/Taoiseach)
Mr Feargal Ó Coigligh (D/AHRRGA)
Ms Sinéad Copeland (D/AIIRRGGA)
Ms Orlaith Lochrin (D/AHRRGA)

Apologies:

Dr Sandra Collins
Mr Francis Devine
Dr. Leeann Lane
Comdt. Stephen MacEoin
Dr Martin Mansergh (Vice Chair)

Key Points:

The minutes of the previous meeting (7th November) were agreed and there were no issues arising.

The Chair expressed his appreciation to Minister Heather Humphreys T.D. for her positive engagement with the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations. He indicated that he planned to invite Minister Josepha Madigan T.D. to attend a future meeting of the Advisory Group.

Further discussion took place around proposals for a conference exploring how other countries experienced civil war. It was agreed that it could be useful to broaden the conference scope to include a multi-faceted consideration of approaches to the remembrance of revolution across that period and related themes. It was reiterated that civil wars are not uniquely Irish and that it would be very useful to have an understanding of how other countries dealt with the remembrance of civil war. The Chair requested the members of the Group to revert with their suggestions regarding possible speakers before the next meeting.

It was agreed that the Director of the National Archives would be invited to brief the Expert Advisory Group at the next meeting concerning queries raised about potential for the digitisation

and early release into the public domain of the 1926 Census returns. It was noted that such a proposal would require legislative change and significant expenditure.

The group briefly reflected on the role of the Defence Forces in commemorative activities over the remainder of the Decade. Further consideration will be given to this.

Discussions took place around the question of the date of the foundation of the State. The 6th December 1922 was mooted as a date which would be likely to be broadly accepted, marking the inaugural meeting of the Parliament of the Irish Free State in Leinster House. It was agreed that there are likely to be many different views on the appropriate date of the foundation of the State, including differing legal and historic perspectives. The objective of the Advisory Group is to endeavour to find a date likely to secure maximum public agreement and acceptance. The Chair noted that it was important for the Advisory Group to take a definitive position on this issue and requested the group to consider this further, with a view to preparing a concise, historically accurate statement on this question.

The Advisory Group envisages that a number of its meetings early in the New Year will involve meeting with interested parties to hear their plans for commemorative activities over the remainder of the Decade, including National Cultural Institutions and the Houses of the Oireachtas. A priority will be to invite the Director of the National Archives to brief the group.

The Group discussed some of the key themes, which will shape its work programme for 2018, including the ending of World War I, the General Strike of 1918, the General Election of 1918, and the introduction of universal suffrage.

The Group considered proposals for the digitisation of Ernie O'Malley's interview notebooks. In view of the significant estimated costs to the State, it was agreed that priority could not be given to the proposal at this time.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Advisory Group will take place on Tuesday, 16th January at 1.15 pm.

Ends.