

Virtual Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Tuesday, 12th May 2020, 1.15 pm

Minutes

Attendees:

Dr Maurice Manning (*Chair*)
Dr Martin Mansergh (*Deputy Chair*)
Dr Sandra Collins
Professor Mary Daly
Mr Francis Devine
Mr Gabriel Doherty
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter
Dr Leann Lane
Dr Sinéad McCoole
Professor Eunan O'Halpin
Dr Éamon Phoenix
Mr Conor Falvey *D/CHG*
Mr Kevin Lonergan, *D/CHG*
Ms Orlaith Lochrin *D/CHG*
Ms Miriam Dollard *D/Taoiseach*
Mr Jerry Kelleher *D/Taoiseach*

Guest Attendee:

Mr Paul Moynihan,
*Director of Corporate Affairs and
International Relations, Cork City Council*

Apologies:

Professor Patrick Geoghegan
Dr Mary Harris
Comdt. Stephen MacEoin

Key Points:

The Chair welcomed Mr Paul Moynihan, Director of Corporate Affairs and International Relations in Cork City Council. Mr Moynihan reported that the evolving COVID-19 national emergency has had a devastating impact on the plans to deliver a major commemorative programme in Cork this year, comprising public commemorative events and associated cultural and community-led activities. This programme was underpinned by a cross-party committee of elected members.

The Chair, on behalf of the Group, noted that 2020 is a very important year for Cork. He acknowledged the great disappointment and sadness of everyone who was involved in developing a very meaningful and significant commemorative programme in Cork City and County.

It was noted that the Cork programme had opened to great enthusiasm and public engagement. On 30th January, a special meeting of Cork City Council to commemorate the first meeting of Council, elected by proportional representation, was very well received.

March was to be a major focal point, with religious and wreath-laying ceremonies due to take place to commemorate the death of Lord Mayor Tomás MacCurtain. The members of the MacCurtain family have responded to the cancellation of these events, with immense graciousness and understanding, notwithstanding their great disappointment.

The local authorities are currently focused on developing front-line responses to support their communities at this time and developing appropriate plans and protocols to support the re-opening of society, in line with the public health advice and protective measures. It may not be clear for some time to what extent the various elements of the Cork commemorative programme can proceed this year. A cautious approach is anticipated until the mechanisms for programme delivery can be clarified and plans can be re-activated.

The Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht will continue to work with and support Cork City Council, in exploring alternative options to the original plans for the State commemoration and other initiatives over the remainder of 2020. Following recent discussions with Cork City Council and with Cork County Council, both local authorities have been encouraged to submit their updated plans and funding requirements as soon as possible.

The Chair re-affirmed that the Group would be happy to offer any support, advice or assistance that may be helpful to Cork City Council.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed, with no matters arising.

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht provided an overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020 Decade of Centenaries programme. It was noted that the significant centenaries occurring in 2020 will continue to be respectfully and appropriately marked, albeit in a different format than originally planned. Any advice or ideas from the members of the Group in this regard would be very welcome.

The Group gave further consideration to plans to commemorate the centenary of the Civil War. It was agreed that the Chair would convene a small working Group to explore matters further. The Group agreed that the focus of the State should remain on commemoration and reconciliation and that the UCC Civil War Conference in 2022, will provide an appropriate forum for examining and debating the events that took place during this period.

Professor Mary Daly provided a brief update to the Group concerning the *Beyond 2022: Ireland's Virtual Record Treasury* research project following the recent meeting of the International Cultural and Scientific Advisory Panel. Plans are progressing very well and the Panel will focus on the question of long-term sustainability over the coming months.

The date of the next meeting will be confirmed in due course.

Ends.

