

Virtual Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Wednesday, 16th December 2020, 12 pm.

Minutes

Attendees:

Dr Maurice Manning (*Chair*)
Dr Martin Mansergh (*Deputy Chair*)
Dr Sandra Collins
Professor Mary Daly
Mr Francis Devine
Mr Gabriel Doherty
Dr Anne Dolan
Dr Mary Harris
Dr Leeann Lane
Comdt. Stephen MacEoin
Dr Sinéad McCooie
Dr William Murphy
Professor Eunan O'Halpin
Dr Éamon Phoenix

Mr Andrew Munro (*D/Taoiseach*)
Ms Miriam Dollard (*D/Taoiseach*)
Mr Conor Falvey *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Sinéad Copeland *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Orlaith Lochrin *D/TCAGSM*

Guest Attendees:

Ms Aileen Nolan (*D/Defence*)
Comdt. Daniel Ayiotis (*Military Archives*)

Apologies:

Professor Diarmaid Ferriter
Professor Patrick Geoghegan
Mr Jerry Kelleher *D/Taoiseach*

Key Points:

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, particularly guest attendees from the Department of Defence and the Military Archives.

Comdt. Daniel Ayiotis, Officer-in-Charge of the Military Archives, and Ms Aileen Nolan, from Dept. of Defence, gave an overview to the Group regarding plans for the final phase of the Decade of Centenaries, including –

- Proposals for two conferences focusing on military aspects of the Struggle for Independence (2021) and the Civil War (2022); and
- Plans to participate in the Artist-in-Residence programme under development for the final phase of the Decade of Centenaries.
- An overview of plans for the ‘*Art in Defence*’ proposal, which was previously endorsed by the Group.

The Group welcomed both conference proposals and offered to provide any assistance or advice that might be helpful to support the further development of plans.

[*Note*: following the meeting, details of the Military Archives collections relating to the Civil War period and its immediate aftermath, including recent and forthcoming releases, were circulated to the Group.]

The Chair noted and commended the first session of *Machnamh 100* – an online initiative of President Higgins, and welcomed Dr Anne Dolan’s contribution to this event.

The Chair commended also the GAA for a very thoughtful, measured, and meaningful ceremony of remembrance in Croke Park to mark the centenary of Bloody Sunday.

The Chair gave an overview to the Group regarding recent events to mark the centenary of the Passing of the Government of Ireland Act, including –

- An online event hosted by Queen’s University Belfast on 10th December, entitled ‘*Reflections on the Centenary of the Government of Ireland Act*’; and
- An event hosted by the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly on 2nd December, entitled ‘*The Government of Ireland Act 1920: Background and Consequences*’, which was presented by Dr Éamon Phoenix. The Group welcomed the participation of Dr Phoenix in this event.

The Group reflected on the importance of local community and cultural engagement within the border regions during the final phase of the Decade of Centenaries. It advocated that wherever possible, efforts should be made to support local authorities and museums in facilitating cross-border engagement and initiatives. D/TCAGSM advised that, in addition to the funding allocated to each local authority, additional funding is available to support recommended cross-border initiatives. It was noted that the Irish Museums Association is very engaged in this area and this may offer scope for potential collaboration.

It was also recommended that when reflecting on Partition, it may be useful to consider international perspectives and comparative contexts.

Professor Richard English from Queen’s University Belfast will be invited to join the next meeting of the Group. Plans for an academic conference to mark the centenary of Partition have now been re-imagined into a series of online talks, due to begin in Spring 2021.

The Chair proposed to consult further with members to explore matters pertaining to cross-border engagement. If members are aware of any potential cross-border proposals or would like to participate on the subgroup, they may contact the Chair. Opportunities for potential informal engagement with the Northern Ireland Centenary Historical Panel, chaired by Professor Lord Bew will also be explored.

D/TCAGSM reported substantial progress in the development of the commemorative programme for 2021. It’s anticipated that the programme will be published online when plans have been finalised. It was noted that the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media has approved the proposed overall approach to programme development and the associated broad themes, for the final phase of the Decade of Centenaries (2021-2023). The Group recommended

that when publishing the programme, consideration be given to ensuring that key events are appropriately contextualised to avoid ambiguity or potential confusion.

The date of the next meeting will be confirmed in the New Year.

Ends.