

Virtual Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Thursday, 12th August 2021 at 1.15 pm

Minutes

Attendees:

Dr Maurice Manning (*Chair*)
Dr Martin Mansergh (*Deputy Chair*)
Professor Mary Daly
Mr Gabriel Doherty
Dr Anne Dolan
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter
Professor Patrick Geoghegan
Comdt. Stephen MacEoin
Ms Sinéad Copeland *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Muirne Lyons *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Orlaith Lochrin *D/TCAGSM*
Mr Jerry Kelleher *D/Taoiseach*

Guest Attendees:

Professor Terry Dooley,
CSHIHE, Maynooth University

Assistant Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, Brigadier General Adrian Ó Murchú
Brigitta O’Doherty, *Department of Defence*
Shane Courtney, *Art in Defence Project*
Committee Secretary

Apologies:

Dr Sandra Collins
Mr Francis Devine
Dr Mary Harris
Dr Leeann Lane
Dr Sinéad McCoole
Dr William Murphy
Professor Eunan O’Halpin
Dr Éamon Phoenix
Mr Conor Falvey *D/TCAGSM*

Key Points:

The Chair welcomed Professor Terence Dooley, Director of the Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates (CSHIHE) at Maynooth University, who outlined his plans for a new project to explore the burning of Irish Country Houses during the period 1920 – 1923. The project will comprise a touring exhibition, public lecture series and associated outreach initiatives, grounded in original research from various primary sources. It is planned to create a freely accessible online version of the exhibition.

The Chair commended Professor Dooley for a very succinct and engaging presentation and the Group endorsed the project plans. The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media is also very supportive of this proposal and its potential to attract meaningful public engagement with this complex period in our history.

In line with advice given by the Group at the meeting, Professor Dooley indicated that the project will also reflect the wider context of the time and will seek to challenge popular misconceptions about the events that took place during this period.

Assistant Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, Brigadier General Adrian Ó Murchú, gave a presentation to the Group concerning plans for the *Art of Defence* project – outlining the project concept and vision, as well as anticipated positive outcomes. The Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces and Secretary General of the Department of Defence are fully supportive of the project, as are the Departments of the Taoiseach and Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

It was noted that this is not a military history based project but a creative and artistic initiative, with historical resonances. The Group agreed that this is an exciting and imaginative project and endorsed the proposal. It will be a significant element under the Creative Expression strand of the commemorative programme in 2023, and indeed the various themes and elements resonate across multiple programme strands. A substantial outreach programme is also anticipated for people of all ages.

The minutes of the previous meeting (29th June) were agreed and there were no matters arising.

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media gave an overview of the Decade of Centenaries programme for 2022. The themes and objectives for next year are aligned with those previously endorsed by the Expert Advisory Group for the final phase of the programme. A process of consultation is currently underway with the All-Party Group on Commemorations, the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Commemorations, and other key partners, including the National Cultural Institutions and local authorities. The Group agreed that this is a very comprehensive and rich programme.

It was noted that requests may be received for particular individuals to be commemorated during the final phase of the Decade of Centenaries. There are many potential figures and it was agreed that not everything can be commemorated at State level. Many of these are already remembered annually at local level and it would be sensible to continue with this approach - allowing for local communities to choose their own commemorative paths.

The Chair provided an update to the Group concerning plans for a one-day conference in Monaghan later this year, which will explore themes associated with border communities, minorities, and partition. Plans for this event are being led by Monaghan County Council (Monaghan County Museum), supported by key Government Departments. It was noted that the role of the Expert Advisory Group in this event is to advise and assist with regard to the development of the conference programme and potential speakers.

The Chair invited any member of the Group who would like to participate in the forthcoming panel discussion event, hosted by the Linen Hall in Belfast, on 20th October, to let him know.

Plans are progressing well for the national academic conference to mark the centenary of the Civil War, hosted by UCC.

An initial discussion reflected on the potential for a conference to mark the centenary of the foundation of the State. Further consideration will be given in this regard.

Under AOB, it was noted that minutes from meetings of the Expert Advisory Group, from 2016 to end 2020, are published on www.decadeofcentenaries.com.

Date of next meeting to be confirmed.

Ends.