

Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Tuesday, 14th May 2019, 1.15 pm
Room 301, Department of the Taoiseach
Minutes

Attendees:

Dr Maurice Manning (*Chair*)
Dr Martin Mansergh (*Vice Chair*)
Professor Mary Daly
Mr Gabriel Doherty
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter
Dr Mary Harris
Dr. Leeann Lane
Ms Sinéad McCooile
Professor Eunan O'Halpin
Dr Éamon Phoenix
Mr Conor Falvey *D/CHG*
Mr Kevin Lonergan, *D/CHG*
Ms Orlaith Lochrin *D/CHG*
Mr Rónán Whelan *D/CHG*
Mr Jerry Kelleher *D/Taoiseach*
Mr Cathal Hunter *D/Taoiseach*

Guest Attendees:

Professor Gerald McKenna, *RIA*
Dr Anne Dolan, *Trinity College Dublin*
Professor Fearghal McGarry,
Queen's University
Professor Richard English,
Queen's University

Apologies:

Dr Sandra Collins
Mr Francis Devine
Professor Patrick Geoghegan
Comdt. Stephen MacEoin

Key Points:

The minutes of the previous meeting (12th March) were agreed and there were no issues arising.

The Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan T.D. briefly joined the Group to express her appreciation for their public service and important work done to date. Minister Madigan re-iterated the Government's commitment to the Decade of Centenaries Programme.

The Chair welcomed Dr Anne Dolan, Professor Gerald McKenna, Professor Richard English and Professor Fearghal McGarry.

The Chair welcomed the proposals from Queen's University Belfast to host an academic conference to mark the centenary of the partitioning of Ireland. He advised that the purpose of this meeting is to open discussions regarding these proposals and seek the views of the Group regarding possible conference themes and structure. It was reiterated that the centenary of

Partition presents particular challenges, requiring a careful and sensitive approach, which is grounded in respected academic research and scholarship.

Professor McKenna advised that the Royal Irish Academy would be supportive of the approach proposed. Exploratory discussions took place concerning potential dates, broad conference themes, scope, and structure.

These discussions also acknowledged the anticipated public interest in exploring the impact of Partition on cross-border communities, including the Derry/Donegal border, Clones, and on the railway links between cities. It was agreed that the potential for local archives, research and scholarship to illuminate this period also merits further consideration. It was also noted that the Ulster Museum is planning a significant exhibition on partition.

It was noted that the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht will be supportive of proposals to mark the centenary of Partition that are aligned with the guidance of the Expert Advisory Group.

It was agreed that Queen's University Belfast will submit written proposals to the Expert Advisory Group for consideration. A small working group will then be convened to consider these proposals and related matters.

In discussions with Dr Anne Dolan, the Group reflected upon the challenges inherent in adopting a historically authentic and measured approach to the remembrance of the Civil War; and how the acts of violence carried out during this conflict might be appropriately addressed. It was noted that archive collections, including the Military Service Pensions Files and the Irish Land Commission records, have a significant role to offer in placing the conflict within the broader context of early 20th century Ireland and how people lived through this period.

It was agreed that the Group will give further consideration to inform the State's approach to the remembrance of the Civil War. In this context, the Chair proposed that it would be useful for the Group to revisit its overall guidance to Government - not with a view to amending the advice already provided but to determine where enhancements and additions to the existing guidance may be helpful.

Under Any Other Business, the Chair advised that he recently met with representatives from RTÉ and outlined the Group's guidance for the forthcoming period, including the centenary of partition.

Regarding the CAIN archive, it was noted that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is engaging in this matter and consultations are ongoing.

Tuesday, 9th July 2019, is proposed for the next meeting of the Expert Advisory Group.

Ends.