

## Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2019, 1.15 pm  
Room 301, Department of the Taoiseach  
**Minutes**

### Attendees:

Dr Maurice Manning (*Chair*)  
Dr Martin Mansergh (*Deputy Chair*)  
Dr Sandra Collins  
Professor Mary Daly  
Mr Gabriel Doherty  
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter  
Dr Sinéad McCool  
Professor Eunan O'Halpin  
Dr Éamon Phoenix

Mr Conor Falvey *D/CHG*  
Mr Kevin Lonergan, *D/CHG*  
Ms Orlaith Lochrin *D/CHG*  
Mr Jerry Kelleher *D/Taoiseach*  
Mr Cathal Hunter *D/Taoiseach*

### Apologies:

Mr Francis Devine  
Professor Patrick Geoghegan  
Dr Mary Harris  
Dr Leeann Lane  
Comdt. Stephen MacEoin

### Key Points:

#### 1. *Minutes of the previous meeting (9<sup>th</sup> July 2019) and matters arising*

The minutes of the previous meeting (9<sup>th</sup> July) were agreed and there were no issues arising.

#### 2. *Update from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht – Plans for 2020*

It was noted that an additional funding allocation of €900,000 has been provided in Budget 2020 to support the Decade of Centenaries programme next year. This funding will be used to enhance support in 2020 under the Community, Historical Exploration, and Creative Imagination strands of the programme. The Department will continue to work in partnership with local authorities, the national cultural institutions, institutions of learning, the trade union movement, custodians of records, and creative communities to build on the achievements of the commemorative programme to date. Work will continue over the coming months to finalise the 2020 programme and bring a Memorandum to the Government in this regard.

Consideration is being given to the local authority current grant funding allocations to progress commemorative initiatives at county level in 2020 under the Decade of Centenaries programme.

The balance of funds under the Community Strand will be allocated having regard to the guidance of the Expert Advisory Group and the geographical positioning of the significant historical events of 1920.

It was agreed that the commemorative model recommended by the Expert Advisory Group to mark the centenary of the Soloheadbeg Ambush is the correct approach to the observance of the sensitive and complex centenaries that will occur in 2020. This approach advocates a leading role for local authorities in supporting and driving community-led commemoration, augmented with appropriate State assistance and participation.

It was noted that appropriate management of stakeholder expectations will be critical, particularly around funding. It will be important for all stakeholders to ensure that the tone and ethos of the various events taking place is grounded in the principles and guidance of the Expert Advisory Group.

The Expert Advisory Group will make enquiries with UCD as to its plans to mark the centenary of the execution of Kevin Barry. The National Concert Hall is also considering plans in this regard.

The Chair met with representatives from the Department of Justice and Equality and that Department is currently considering how the role of the RIC and DMP might be appropriately acknowledged.

At its next meeting, the Group will consider what recommendations it may provide to inform the State's approach to the remembrance of the civilians who suffered and died during the Struggle for Independence. Initiatives that encourage artistic and creative expression might be very helpful in this regard.

The Group will also reflect on what guidance it may provide to the State concerning the centenary of the introduction of the Government of Ireland Act 1920. An approach which also considers the events of this period from a British perspective would be very important.

### *3. Update from the Chair on the proposed conferences in Cork and Belfast*

The Chair provided an update regarding discussions with University College Cork concerning its plans for a national conference to mark the centenary of the Civil War. The Expert Advisory Group endorsed the UCC proposals and agreed that the academic integrity and independence of the conference programme was paramount.

The conference will be organised and hosted by University College Cork. All decisions concerning themes, speakers and conference content will be determined by a newly established core academic committee. The membership of this committee will be determined by the host university in consultation with the Expert Advisory Group and, in determining its composition, should give consideration to reputational, gender and regional factors. It is essential that the

work of the committee be ring-fenced and protected from any external influence from any quarter.

Other conference arrangements can be overseen by a broader conference committee – the membership of that committee is currently under consideration by UCC.

It was also agreed that where certain local authorities will have an interest in organising events to mark the centenary of the Civil War, it would be appropriate for these community initiatives to take place independently from the academic conference programme.

Discussions will also take place shortly with Queen's University Belfast to further explore its proposals for a conference to mark the centenary of the passing of Government of Ireland Act and Partition. A further update will be then be provided to the Group.

*4. The commitment under the National Development Plan 2018 – 2027 to explore options to 'appropriately record and reflect Ireland's Protestant cultural heritage as part of the wider Decade of Centenaries commemorative programme'.*

It was noted that the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has not yet received specific proposals in this regard. The Expert Advisory Group advocated that a broader approach, which explores the experiences of minority communities on both sides of the border, would be very appropriate. It was agreed that quality, considered proposals could have a significant role in promoting reconciliation on the island of Ireland and in enhancing North/South relationships. The Department will consult further with the Expert Advisory Group when proposals are received.

The Expert Advisory Group considered how levels of local support in border communities for a project such as this could be gauged. It recommended that consideration could be given to State support for a temporary exhibition on this theme in an appropriate venue(s), which could stimulate and enhance cross-border engagement and local community support.

*5. Further consideration of the formal State-led commemorations envisaged over the remainder of the Decade of Centenaries to 2023*

No formal State-led commemorations are envisaged for 2020, in accordance with the guidance of the Expert Advisory Group, but planning will now commence for the State Ceremonial events that will take place in 2021, 2022 and 2023. It was noted that in 2021, the National Day of Commemoration takes place on Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> July. The existence of this established State ceremonial event may offer a fitting opportunity for an enhanced State commemoration, if so advised.

The Chair invited the Group to consider possibilities for a State commemoration in remembrance of all who suffered and who died during the Civil War. (It may be noted that previous discussions in this matter mooted the possibility of a formal State commemoration on Leinster

Lawn, focusing on themes of remembrance and reconciliation, involving the Oireachtas, the Executive and the Judiciary). This will be considered further at the next meeting.

#### *6. Any other business*

The Expert Advisory Group strongly recommended that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade gives consideration to supporting the digitisation of the Manchester Guardian Commercial series of supplements in order to make these freely available online.

The Expert Advisory Group also endorsed proposals from the Military History Society of Ireland and the Military Archives for a conference in Cathal Brugha Barracks, focusing on the military aspects of the Struggle for Independence.

The Department of the Taoiseach briefed the Group regarding the transfer of four file collections in September of this year from the Department of the Taoiseach to the National Archives and the Military Archives. A briefing note in this regard was subsequently circulated to the Group.

The Department of the Taoiseach also advised of the planned release by the Military Archives on 28<sup>th</sup> November of files concerning the 1924 Army Enquiry Committee, which was conducted from the Council Chamber (Cabinet Room) in the Department of the Taoiseach.

#### *7. Date of the next meeting*

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> November.

*Ends.*