

Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Tuesday, 19th November 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 Francis Devine
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter
Dr Sinéad McCool
Professor Eunan O'Halpin
Dr Éamon Phoenix
Mr Kevin Lonergan, *D/CHG*
Ms Orlaith Lochrin *D/CHG*
Mr Jerry Kelleher *D/Taoiseach*
Mr Cathal Hunter *D/Taoiseach*

Guest Attendees:

Mr Colin Murphy
John Dredge, *PDST*
Frances Moss, *D/Education and Skills*
Maeve Price, *D/Education and Skills*

Apologies:

Mr Gabriel Doherty
Professor Patrick Geoghegan
Dr Mary Harris
Dr Leeann Lane
Comdt. Stephen MacEoin
Mr Conor Falvey *D/CHG*

Key Points:

Colin Murphy provided an overview to the Expert Advisory Group concerning proposals for the production of his new play to mark the centenary of the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations, by Fishamble theatre company. His objective in completing this work is to balance historical rigour with creativity, producing a historically accurate exploration of the Treaty negotiations of 1921, grounded in authentic archival sources within a dramatic setting. There may be associated touring opportunities and the play also has potential for use as an educational resource to support teachers.

The Expert Advisory Group noted, with interest, Mr Murphy's proposals and suggested that further discussions may be helpful between the Fishamble theatre company and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to explore matters further. The Group noted that there may also be other individual proposals with artistic and cultural elements relevant to the forthcoming period of commemorations.

Representatives from the Department of Education and Skills (D/E&S) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) provided a detailed overview to the Expert Advisory Group concerning plans to support young people and their teachers in navigating the complexities of the forthcoming period of the Decade of Centenaries.

In October 2019, D/E&S issued a guidance note to schools, aligned with the principles and guidance of the Expert Advisory Group, to highlight the importance of the Decade of Centenaries and to support teachers in navigating the challenges posed in commemorating contentious events and themes in our shared history.

A PDST resource for Transition Year and Leaving Certificate History, entitled '*Teaching the Irish Civil War, 1922–1923*' is due to be published before the end of the month and will be introduced to teachers with a series of workshops in various education centres around the country.

The All Island Schools' History Competition has been re-established for 2019/2020, in partnership with University College Cork School of History. D/E&S is continuing to work in partnership with Glasnevin Trust to support the extension of its education programme to all primary schools, through the medium of English and Irish. It was also noted that there are currently 3,100 digital resources dedicated to history, available on <https://www.scoilnet.ie/>.

The Chair congratulated D/E&S on its significant achievements to date and on the great enthusiasm with which it has embraced the Decade of Centenaries. D/E&S would welcome any advice that the Expert Advisory Group may have in highlighting the various initiatives being undertaken and the resources available to teachers. Opportunities for engagement with the National Cultural Institutions, regional museums and libraries and other organisations would also be very useful.

The minutes of the previous meeting (15th October) were agreed. Arising from discussions at the previous meeting (Agenda Item 4), it was noted that the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has not yet received specific proposals concerning the experiences of minority communities on both sides of the border. D/CHG will make further enquiries in this regard.

The Chair provided an update to the Expert Advisory Group regarding discussions with University College Cork and Queen's University Belfast concerning the proposed conferences to mark the centenaries of the Civil War and Partition.

The Chair reiterated the importance of having ring-fenced academic committees to protect the integrity and independence of the respective conference programmes. Membership of both committees is currently under consideration, having regard to reputation, gender and geographical factors.

A meeting with Professor Richard English of Queen's University Belfast is due to take place on 4th December and all members of the group who would like to attend are welcome.

It was agreed that representatives from RTE will be invited to brief the next meeting of the Expert Advisory Group. Representatives from the National Cultural Institutions, who have not already briefed the Group regarding their plans, will also be invited to do so over the coming months.

Members of the Group were invited to propose possible themes or topics for consideration as part of the 2022 programme of special and commemorative stamps.

The next meeting is provisionally scheduled for Tuesday, 14th January 2020.

Ends.