

Virtual Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Tuesday, 9th February 2021 at 1.15 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
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter
Professor Patrick Geoghegan
Dr Mary Harris
Dr Leeann Lane
Comdt. Stephen MacEoin
Dr Sinéad McCooile
Dr William Murphy
Professor Eunan O'Halpin
Dr Éamon Phoenix

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

Guest Attendees:

Professor Richard English,
Queen's University Belfast

Ms Elaine Martin
Mr Patrick Nevin
'The Irish Psyche and Travellers'

Ms Catriona Crowe
Mr Pádraig Yeates
Dr Christopher Murray
*The Seán O'Casey House Cultural Project
Committee*

Key Points:

Professor Richard English gave a presentation to update the Group concerning plans by Queen's University Belfast for an online series of public talks to mark the centenary of Partition. Professor English expressed his appreciation to the Group for their support. The talks will include a focus on comparative and international aspects to Partition.

It was noted that the online event, hosted by Queen's University Belfast, on 10th December, [*Reflections on the Centenary of the Government of Ireland Act*], was very significant and set a collaborative and inclusive tone for the forthcoming commemorative period.

It was noted that local councils across Northern Ireland plan to host various events, predominantly focused in April/May, leading up to the centenary of the address by King George V to the new Parliament of Northern Ireland on 22nd June.

The Chair advised that it's intended that various cross-border initiatives will be supported under the final phase of the Decade of Centenaries programme to explore the experiences of minority communities on both sides of the border following Partition.

Ms Elaine Martin and Mr Patrick Nevin gave a presentation to the Group, reflecting on the experiences of the Traveller Community since the Foundation of the State and related themes of cultural trauma and identity. The Chair noted that this was a very helpful presentation and suggested that further dialogue could be useful. He invited Ms Martin and Mr Nevin to consider if there are specific initiatives that could be developed and if the Group could provide further advice or assistance that may be helpful. Dr Mary Harris will liaise with both in the coming weeks to assist in scoping out potential proposals, in consultation with colleagues in NUI Galway.

Ms Catríona Crowe, Mr Pádraig Yeates and Dr Christopher Murray gave a presentation to the Group concerning their proposals for the restoration of Seán O'Casey's home at 422 North Circular Road as a cultural hub, grounded in the local community. The Group is supportive of this proposal and noted that the lead public authority in this matter appears to be Dublin City Council.

It was agreed that it would be very helpful to publish the minutes of the Group from meetings held in 2020, on the Decade of Centenaries website, www.decadeofcentenaries.com.

D/TCAGSM provided an update regarding plans to publish online the Decade of Centenaries programme for 2021. All proposals discussed previously are progressing. It was noted that RTE has submitted proposals for an extensive commemorative programme comprising factual and cultural content, which is currently under consideration. A new women's strand for the final phase of the Decade of Centenaries is due to be launched in April. Potential options for cross-border cultural and community engagement are being explored.

The Chair commended Dr Éamon Phoenix for his work in highlighting the forgotten minorities, on both sides of the border following Partition. In line with Dr Phoenix's proposals, the Group agreed that a ground-up, community-led approach, supported by cross-border local authority and local council engagement, would be very appropriate. The Chair invited the Group to reflect further and contact him with an obs.

The Chair provided an update to the Group regarding plans for an academic conference to mark the centenary of the handover of Dublin Castle on 16th January 2022. It was noted that the original proposals presented to the Group by Dr Martin Maguire last July have been reconsidered following discussions. A one-day conference has now been agreed, focusing on the historical significance of the events that took place leading up to and during the handover of the Castle. The Group endorsed this approach and advocated that a public facing approach will be very important, with a conference programme that interests and engages the public. Academic

integrity and independence will be paramount and the Department of History at Trinity College Dublin will have the lead role in organising this event.

It was agreed that a second conference, potentially in December 2022/January 2023, would be very useful and the focus of this event would be to explore the challenges faced by the emerging Irish State.

The Group was invited to propose themes for consideration by the Philatelic Advisory Committee under the 2023 commemorative stamp programme. The following ideas were endorsed:

- A stamp to mark the centenary of the award to W.B. Yeats of the Nobel Prize for Literature; Dr Sandra Collins noted that the National Library is supportive of this proposal and would be happy to make images or other material from its archival collections available if this would be helpful.
- A stamp to mark the centenary of Ireland's entry into the League of Nations.
- If the Philatelic Advisory Committee is of the view that a stamp should be commissioned to mark the ending of the Civil War, one potential option, which could be considered is Seán Keating's painting, *'An Allegory'*.

The Group reflected on the use of language in public discourse about the events that took place during 1919/1921; War of Independence, Campaign for Independence, and Struggle for Independence, are terms widely used, in different contexts. It was noted that the Decade of Centenaries programme adopts a broad focus, which acknowledges the military activity as well as the many other dimensions interwoven with the conflict, including political, social, cultural and economic aspects.

Date of next meeting to be confirmed.

Ends.