

Hybrid Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Tuesday, 7th February 2023 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
Lt. Col. Stephen MacEoin
Dr Sinéad McCoole
Dr William Murphy
Ms Pauline Kiernan *D/Taoiseach*
Mr Conor Falvey *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Sinéad Copeland *D/TCAGSM*
Mr Rónán Whelan *D/TCAGSM*
Orlaith Lochrin *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Muirne Lyons *D/TCAGSM*

Apologies:

Mr Jerry Kelleher
Dr Leeann Lane
Professor Eunan O'Halpin

Guest Attendees:

Neil Ward, *Assistant Secretary, D/Justice*
Anthony Doyle, *Principal Officer, D/Justice*

Key Points:

Colleagues from the Department of Justice gave an overview of commemorative initiatives across the Justice Sector for the final phase of the Decade of Centenaries.

In 2021, seminars were held exploring themes of same-sex relationships in early 20th century Ireland and the impact of women's involvement in the justice sector over the past century. In 2022, the centenary of the foundation of the Civic Guards (An Garda Síochána) was marked with a substantial and varied commemorative programme. The Courts Service collaborated with the Beyond 2022: research project and the National Archives of Ireland to mark the centenary of the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland in the opening engagement of the Civil War. A commemorative event with the Courts Service and National Archives marked the work of the Constitution Committee leading up to the centenary of the enactment of the Irish Free State Constitution on 6th December. The impact of locally organised Justice Sector events around the country was significant also.

Key elements of the Justice Sector commemorative programme for 2023 include;

- An Autumn symposium in partnership with University College Dublin, which will examine the evolution of all aspects of the justice sector over the past 200 years, including policing and probation;
- Initiatives to mark the centenary of the ‘Censorship of Films Act 1923’ and the establishment of the office of Official Censor of Films and the Censorship of Films Appeal Board; and
- A major cataloguing and digitisation initiatives of Department of Justice files, in collaboration with the National Archives of Ireland.

Department of Justice colleagues have advised that their programme will run beyond the Decade of Centenaries, into 2024. Potential projects under consideration for 2024 include proposals to commission and publish a written history of the Department, initiatives to mark the centenary of the ‘Courts of Justice Act 1924’, and initiatives to mark the centenary of the re-naming of the then ‘Department of Home Affairs’ as the ‘Department of Justice’.

The Chair commended the Department of Justice for developing very substantial, collaborative and inclusive plans, welcoming particularly the opening up of archives and emphasis on local participation. The Group offered some suggestions for consideration, including thematic strands, noting the ambition and reach of the programme and tight timeframes for delivery. The Group endorsed the proposals and reiterated their offer of any assistance or advice that may be helpful as plans progress.

The minutes of the previous meeting on 7th February were agreed and there were no matters arising.

The Group reiterated their previous advice that a further element of recognition by the State would be appropriate to mark the centenary of the Civil War and reflected on potential options for a ceremonial event. They recommended a solemn, formal, inclusive, stand-alone national commemorative event, which would be broadcast live, making it as accessible as possible to a broad public audience at home and around the world. They advocated a key role for the President and political leaders. The Group noted also that for many people, the civil war was an event of great local significance rather than a Dublin centred event and therefore, community-led commemorations around the country will continue to be very important in the months ahead.

An update was provided to the Group concerning plans to mark the centenary of Ireland’s admission into the League of Nations – plans are progressing well and the advice of the Group has been very helpful in framing the context for the commemorative programme.

Dr Sinéad McCoole gave an overview of <https://www.mna100.ie/>, an online multi-media resource for the final phase of the Decade of Centenaries, focusing on the role and experiences of women from 1921 to 1923. Dr McCoole outlined key achievements to date and plans for 2023. The programme includes a specially created, short film with Professor Lindsey Earner Byrne examining sexual violence against women during the Civil War. Mná100, in partnership with the Irish Embassies in India, created a film about the life and legacy of Margaret ‘Gretta’ Cousins exploring her contribution to women’s franchise and women and girls’ education. Mná100 will also examine themes such as the local and national elections, and imprisonment of women during

this period. In March, a round table event will gather together descendants of key protagonists who will discuss the legacy of the civil war on their families.

Under A.O.B. Francis Devine gave an overview of plans to celebrate the Irish Labour History Society's 50th anniversary, including a conference in September and forthcoming publication.

The Chair commended An Post for its excellent publication, *'History on a Stamp, An Post and the Decade of Centenaries, 1913 – 1922'* and for its enthusiastic and thoughtful engagement throughout the Decade of Centenaries.

Date of next meeting to be confirmed.

Ends.