

Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Centenary Commemorations

Tuesday, 3rd October 2023, at 1.15 pm
Room 301, Department of the Taoiseach

Minutes

Attendees:

Dr Maurice Manning (*Chair*)
Dr Sandra Collins
Professor Mary Daly
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter
Professor Patrick Geoghegan
Dr Mary Harris
Mr Jerry Kelleher
Lt. Col. Stephen MacEoin
Dr Sinéad McCooile
Ms Emily Whelton *D/Taoiseach*
Ms Sinéad Copeland *D/TCAGSM*
Mr Rónán Whelan *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Orlaith Lochrin *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Muirne Lyons *D/TCAGSM*

Apologies:

Mr Francis Devine
Mr Gabriel Doherty
Dr Anne Dolan
Dr Leeann Lane
Dr Martin Mansergh (*Deputy Chair*)
Dr William Murphy
Professor Eunan O'Halpin
Mr Conor Falvey *D/TCAGSM*

Guest Attendees:

Representatives from the Treaty Generation
Descendants Group;
Ms Carol Fawsitt (*Presenter*)
Mr Tadhg Crowley (*Presenter*)
Mr Wally Young (*Presenter*)
Ms Eda Sagarra (*Observer*)
Mr Cathal McSwiney Brugha (*Observer*)
Mr Michael O'Mahony (*Observer*)

Key Points:

The Chair welcomed representatives of the Treaty Generation Descendants Group and invited the presenters – Ms Carol Fawsitt, Mr Tadhg Crowley, and Mr Wally Young - to outline their proposal for an *Annual People's Day of Reconciliation*. At the outset, the Chair emphasised that the EAG is an advisory group, without executive functions, and noted that the Department of the Taoiseach has already responded to this proposal.

The Treaty Generation Descendants Group outlined the various elements of their proposal for an *Annual People's Day of Reconciliation*. It was suggested by the Group that the proposed day could build on what has been achieved by the Decade of Centenaries and connect people, where everyone realises their sense of identity and feels seen and heard. The Day could be used to promote an annual *Irish Peace and Reconciliation Award*. The presenters highlighted the ethos and principles

underpinning their proposed approach, as well as the leading role envisaged for the State in determining, developing, and leading the plans, with support from the Oireachtas, local councils, communities, schools, and cultural organisations, amongst others. Examples of what people could be encouraged to do were provided.

The Chair commended the Treaty Generation Descendants Group for their very considered, thoughtful, and contextualised presentation and agreed with the presenters' intention to begin modestly - building on the positive outcomes and achievements of the Decade of Centenaries Programme. The Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media noted that substantial work is already being done through the Shared Island and other initiatives, and also across the arts and cultural sector, to enhance co-operation, mutual understanding, and reconciliation on the island, and to engage with all communities and traditions.

The Chair thanked the Treaty Generation Descendants Group representatives and noted that the Expert Advisory Group would reflect on their proposal.

The minutes of the previous meeting on 11th July were agreed and there were no matters arising.

The Group discussed the draft paper outlining a suggested approach to commemorations after the conclusion of the Decade of Centenaries, offering observations and suggested amendments for consideration. An updated draft will be circulated to the Group before the next meeting for any final comments. It is hoped to agree and finalise the text at the next meeting of the Expert Advisory Group.

The Group discussed the opening presentation given by the Treaty Generation Descendants Group. They agreed that the focus on the creation of an annual *Irish Peace and Reconciliation Award* was particularly noteworthy and a very good idea. This could perhaps be a useful starting point for the Treaty Generation Descendants Group in progressing their plans, without requiring a leading role from the State – indeed having a degree of separation and independence from State involvement could be a strength. The Group noted that the overall proposals for an annual *People's Day of Reconciliation* would have significant costs involved, and that initiatives such as this are seldom cost neutral. The Group reflected on the work already being done by the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation and suggested that the Treaty Generation Descendants Group may find it helpful to explore potential options for co-operation or collaboration in developing their plans. The Chair advised that he will write to Ms Fawsitt summarising the observations of the Expert Advisory Group which he hoped would be helpful.

The Group considered the proposal from the Irish Association of Professional Historians, which advocates for consideration to be given to continuing and expanding the Decade of Centenaries Bursary Scheme after the conclusion of the Decade of Centenaries. The Department (D/TCAGSM) noted that, while availability of funding is subject to the annual budgetary estimates process, the bursary scheme has had a very positive impact and has highlighted the important work being undertaken in the field of local history studies. The Department will engage with the RIA to explore future options for the scheme.

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.

Ends.