

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

Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023, at 1.15 pm  
Room 301, Department of the Taoiseach

### Minutes

#### Attendees:

Dr Maurice Manning (*Chair*)  
Dr Martin Mansergh (*Deputy Chair*)  
Professor Mary Daly  
Mr Francis Devine  
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter  
Professor Patrick Geoghegan  
Dr Mary Harris  
Mr Jerry Kelleher  
Dr Sinéad McCoole  
Dr William Murphy  
Professor Eunan O'Halpin  
Ms Mary Keenan *D/Taoiseach*  
Mr Conor Falvey *D/TCAGSM*  
Ms Sinéad Copeland *D/TCAGSM*  
Mr Rónán Whelan *D/TCAGSM*  
Ms Orlaith Lochrin *D/TCAGSM*  
Ms Muirne Lyons *D/TCAGSM*

#### Apologies:

Dr Sandra Collins  
Mr Gabriel Doherty  
Dr Anne Dolan  
Dr Leeann Lane  
Lt. Col. Stephen MacEoin

#### Guest Attendees:

Evelyn Flanagan, *Head of Special Collections, UCD Library*  
Catherine Wilsdon, *Creative Producer, Poetry as Commemoration Initiative*

#### Key Points:

The Chair welcomed Ms Evelyn Flanagan and Dr Catherine Wilsdon from the *Poetry as Commemoration* initiative, which is led by the Irish Poetry Reading Archive at UCD Library and supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. They outlined the project's activities, impacts, and achievements - engaging poets from across the island and beyond through poetry commissions, creative writing workshops and public poetry installations.

They presented the Expert Advisory Group with copies of *Grief's Broken Bow* – a limited edition, fine press book, created by Jamie Murphy at The Salvage Press. The book includes original artwork by James Earley and commemorative poems by Bebe Ashley, Chiamaka Enyi-Amadi, Martina Evans, Seán Hewitt, Nithy Kasa, Victoria Kennefick, Aifric Mac Aodha, Paul Muldoon, Pádraig Regan, and Stephen Sexton.

The Chair commended everyone involved in the *Poetry as Commemoration* project for their vision, commitment, and imagination – noting especially the public engagement element of the project, which has been a cornerstone of its success. By the end of the project, 137 workshops will be completed for adults and children and over 400 poems created, which will be added to a new archive in UCD Special Collections as well as a digital archive on <https://www.poetryascommemoration.ie/>. The Group suggested that engagement with the Irish Embassy in London and with RTÉ might be helpful in enhancing the potential for further promotion of the project.

On 17<sup>th</sup> October, the Department (D/TCAGSM) hosted a reflective forum for local authorities to mark the end of the Decade of Centenaries. The Chair noted that the local authority co-ordinators expressed their great appreciation for the Expert Advisory Group's endorsement of their work, ongoing encouragement, and practical advice throughout the Decade of Centenaries. The Group's guiding principles and advice was an immense support to the local authorities, giving them clarity, reassurance, and help in addressing sensitive and complex commemorative matters as they arose.

The Group reviewed the draft report reflecting on the Decade of Centenaries and made some suggestions and edits to the text. The Chair noted that the scope of the Expert Advisory Group in the context of this report is primarily to reflect on the Decade of Centenaries Programme - its structures, thematic approach, learnings, achievements, and outcomes. It will be a matter for the Government to determine specifically the approach to commemorations after the Decade of Centenaries concludes. It's envisaged that the Department (D/TCAGSM) and the Department of the Taoiseach will jointly bring a Memorandum to Government before Christmas, setting out the proposed approach and structures underpinning future commemorations and the completed report will be included with the Memorandum.

Minister Martin intends to host a lunch for the Expert Advisory Group to express her appreciation for their work and public service throughout the Decade of Centenaries.

The Chair noted that this meeting brings the Expert Advisory Group's term of office to a close. He warmly thanked Deputy Chair, Dr Martin Mansergh, and every member of the Group for their immense commitment, collegiality, enthusiasm, sensitivity, and friendship throughout the Decade of Centenaries. Their respectful engagement and thoughtful approach was immensely important in creating an atmosphere of trust and openness, which underpinned the Group's discussions and work.

The members reflected that it was a most enjoyable experience for everyone and that this model had worked very well. They commended Dr Manning for his outstanding leadership, thoughtful judgement, and principled approach. The contribution of officials in the Department and across Government was also acknowledged – noting that the independence of the Group was respected throughout the process, leading to very positive engagement on all sides. The Department sincerely thanked the Chair, Deputy Chair and every member of the Group for all of their advice and work, noting that it is greatly appreciated at both official and political level.

*Ends.*