

Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Tuesday, 11th July 2023 at 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
Dr Anne Dolan
Dr Mary Harris
Lt. Col. Stephen MacEoin
Dr Sinéad McCoole
Mr Francis Devine
Mr Gabriel Doherty
Mr Jerry Kelleher
Professor Eunan O'Halpin
Ms Emily Whelton *D/Taoiseach*
Mr Conor Falvey *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Sinéad Copeland *D/TCAGSM*
Mr Rónán Whelan *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Muirne Lyons *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Kate Nevin *D/TCAGSM*

Apologies:

Professor Diarmaid Ferriter
Ms Orlaith Lochrin *D/TCAGSM*
Dr Leeann Lane
Dr William Murphy
Professor Patrick Geoghegan

Guest Attendees:

John O'Kane, *Music and Arts Strategy Executive, RTÉ*
Seán Mac Ghiolla Padraig, *Group Head of Factual, RTÉ*
Colm O'Callaghan, *Commissioning Editor Specialist Factual, RTÉ*
Philip King, *Director South Wind Blows*
Nuala O' Connor, *Director South Wind Blows*
Virginia Teehan, *Director of the Heritage Council*

Key Points:

The Chair welcomed representatives from RTÉ who gave a presentation to the Expert Advisory Group on plans for an event to mark the end of the Decade of Centenaries Programme. The event will take place in the RDS on 7th October and be a major cultural production showcasing a large and diverse cast of performers. The 75 minute programme will be broken into chapters or themes and will begin from 1923 and Ireland's admission into the League of Nations. The programme will be broadcast at a later date on RTÉ One television, the RTÉ Player and on RTÉ Radio 1.

The Chair commended RTÉ on the quality of their programming related to the Decade of Centenaries to date, which was wide ranging and interesting. He was confident that this event would be a success if it maintains the quality of the previous programming. The Group also expressed the important legacy value of the RTÉ Decade of Centenaries Programming. RTÉ confirmed that all programming will be collated and made available as a complete resource on the RTÉ Player. The complete programme will also be repeated on RTÉ 2 and there are ongoing plans for engagement with schools.

Interesting events or themes beyond the Decade that merit further exploration, or would make interesting subject matter, were also discussed. Suggestions from RTÉ and the Group included: statehood - how to start a country; the land commission; Ireland and the early recognition and importance of our international status; the development of the Irish Military and its role both nationally and internationally; and how the rest of the world viewed the Irish revolutionary period.

RTÉ confirmed that they will continue to support and develop history programming on RTÉ and will continue to welcome input from the Expert Advisory Group or a future iteration of the Group.

Virginia Teehan, Chief Executive Officer of the Heritage Council, gave a presentation on the landscape of cultural heritage in Ireland. The Council aims to develop a national programme to ensure the employment of archivists, conservation officers, curators and archaeologists, across local authorities over the period from 2023 to 2030. The importance and renewed interest from the public in archives as a result of the Decade of Centenaries Programme was highlighted by the Heritage Council. The importance of having dedicated staff to maintain and collate significant local archives, and suitable infrastructure to maintain and store the material, was stressed by the Expert Advisory Group. The archive system in France, which is driven from a local level, was given as an example of a possible framework to follow. The Chair reiterated the Group's support for the initiative and the Department will liaise at official level to see how this national programme can be supported.

The minutes of the previous meeting on 9th May were agreed and there were no matters arising.

The Expert Advisory Group expressed their support in principle for the paper detailing the approach to commemorations after the Decade of Centenaries. It was stressed that one of the key elements to the success of the work of the Expert Advisory Group has been its independence and that this should be highlighted in the document. This was supported by the Department.

The Group also suggested some other additions to the documents. This included a reference to the deceased members of the Group and also the significant Anglo-Irish dimension to the Programme. Many of the points raised during the Heritage Council presentation regarding the importance of local archives were also thought to merit consideration. It was also suggested that the existing guiding principles were still sound and could be used to support any future commemorations. The Chair encouraged the Group to return with their comments on the paper to the Commemorations Unit by next week.

Speaking on the document that detailed the events to mark the end of the Decade of Centenaries, the Chair commented that it showed a great variety of events.

The Group was also thanked for their support for the Irish Labour History Society Conference which is scheduled to take place in September.

Date of next meeting to be confirmed.

Ends.