

Meeting of the National Archives Advisory Council

15 February 2022

Present: Mr. John Hedigan, (Chair), Dr. Hiram Morgan, Dr. Ciara Breathnach, Mr. Kieran Hoare, Mr. Michael Nolan, Dr. Natalie Harrower, Mr. John Grenham, Comdt. Stephen Mac Eoin, Dr. Elizabeth Mullins, Brian McGee, Professor Deirdre Raftery.

Apologies: Ms. Catriona Mulcahy.

In attendance: Ms. Orlaith McBride (NAI Director)

1. Minutes of Meeting on 23 November 2022 (for approval)

The minutes were approved for web publication.

There was a broad discussion in relation to the appointment of archivists within the National Archives and across government departments and the different requirements for each given the role and level of responsibility.

2. Update from the Director

The Director updated the Council on the following:

- Capital Projects including the Archives Repository Project (ARP)
- Census 1926 and the process to commence work
- 20-Year and 30-Year Rule
- Staffing and recruitment
- Update on Commemorations Programme including the Talks series, the Treaty Exhibition at Dublin Castle as well as the artist-in-residence programme
- Covid and Reading Room

The Michael Collins diaries were discussed in the context of ensuring local academics/historical societies are included in the programme of events in August 2022 to mark the release of the digitised diaries.

3. NAAC Event

The role of the NAAC in terms advocating the responsibility of the state to the records of the state will form the basis of the talk at the event in May/June. Discussions are on-going with the Court of Appeal in terms of live streaming the event from there.

The Chair will make an address for 15/20 minutes followed by a panel discussion with three/four panel members.

The main audience for the event will be archival community, government departments, readers and users of National Archives.

4. Letter from Local Authority Archivists

There was discussion on the letter received from Niamh Brennan on behalf of the Local Authority and Record Managers Group arising from the publication in November 2021 of the Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions, specifically concerning the archival management of records that document among other things actions carried out by local authorities and their historic predecessors in relation to the health and welfare of individuals at local level.

It was agreed that a sub-group of the NAAC would draft a letter for issuing to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage specifically highlighting the need for these records to be held in the custody of the relevant local authority in accordance with section 80 (2) of the Local Government Act of 2001 which states that 'it is a function of a local authority to make arrangements for the proper management, custody, care and conservation of local records and local archives and for inspection by the public of local archives.

It was also agreed that the letter would advocate for the employment of archivists in every local authority acknowledging the tremendous contribution made by individual local authority archivists in the preservation of their county's history. There are currently 12 counties which do not have a permanent archivist. The absence of permanent, professional archivists puts local archives at risk.

5. AOB

There was discussion in relation to the current term of the NAAC ending in July 2022 and the process via the Public Appointments Service for new NAAC members.

In the context of the current term of the NAAC finishing it was agreed that an 18-month annual report would be produced in 2022 representing the work of the NAAC in 2021 and to July 2022.

There was no other business.