

Meeting of The National Archives Advisory Council

22nd June 2022

Present: Mr. John Hedigan, (Chair), Mr. John Grenham, Dr. Elizabeth Mullins, Ms. Catriona Mulcahy, Dr. Ciara Breathnach, Mr. Michael Nolan

Apologies: Comdt. Stephen Mac Eoin, Mr. Brian McGee, Professor Deirdre Raftery, Dr. Hiram Morgan, Mr. Kieran Hoare, Dr. Natalie Harrower

In attendance: Ms. Orlaith McBride (NAI Director), Simon Willmott (NAI)

1. Minutes of Meeting on 26th April

The minutes were approved for web publication.

2. Matters Arising

None.

3. NAAC Annual Report

The Council agreed that overall the draft report was an accurate summary of the work that had been carried out since the last report. There were suggestions made to make some minor changes to syntax and language used.

It was also agreed that the report should highlight the need for the development of a Digital Repository within the National Archives. The Director advised that the creation of the National Centre for Research and Remembrance would begin this process.

The final draft will be sent to Simon Willmott for circulation to all members for any further amendments or additions. The final report is to be completed before the Council's five year term formally concludes on 19th July 2022.

4. Directors Report

The Director updated the Council on the following:

- Staffing
- Capital Spending
- National Centre for Research and Remembrance
- Commemorations Programme

In relation to staffing the Director advised the Council that nine archivists had been appointed to the National Archives since the establishment of an open panel in 2021. The position of Keeper had recently been filled following the retirement of Tom Quinlan and also an additional Keeper was appointed 6 weeks ago. The position of Senior Conservator was also currently being filled.

There is currently a request for 12 additional staff to be deployed to the National Centre for Research and Remembrance and the creation of the Digital Repository.

In relation to Capital Spending the refurbishment of the 5th floor is due to begin on 4th July. The Director advised this is necessary to increase office accommodation for current and future staffing needs. The Council was also updated on the Archival Repository Project (ARP).

The Director advised the Council that the setting up of the National Centre for Research and Remembrance was gaining pace. The Steering group is being chaired by Martin Fraser which has been meeting regularly with three sub groups established.

The Director is the Chair of the Archives sub group which has been established to initially conduct a survey of departmental records and report back by the end of September. It is estimated that there are 7 to 8 million records.

The second group is working with survivor groups.

The third group is tasked with investigating the legislative issues and the changes needed in order to make records available. The Director advised that proposed changes to the National Archives Act 1986 will form part of this process.

The Director also provided an update on details on the proposed site at Sean McDermott Street including floor space requirements for the National Archives element and plans for new reading and lecture rooms. The plans for a new third level institution were also discussed.

There was also clarification provided on the class/type of records currently being identified within departments with a split between policy documents and individual case files. It was also explained that the transfer of ownership of the site from Dublin City Council to the State was anticipated on the 4th July. It was agreed that the new centre would enhance the presence of the National Archives in Dublin.

There was a discussion about plans for the 1926 Census and new AI driven technology that could be used in integrating 1901, 1911 and 1926 Census data sets. The Director advised that the new Keeper would be leading out on this project and communicating with potential software partners. It was advised that a budget of €5 million euros had been ring-fenced for this area.

In relation to the Commemorations Programme the Director gave an update on the

recent Artist in Residence Exhibition as well as the upcoming Public Records of Ireland Exhibition in conjunction with the Irish Architectural Archive opening on the 30th June. The Director also advised the Council about the Beyond 2022 launch on 27th June and the progress of the Michael Collins Diary event in Cork.

5. Land Commission Records

The IMC requested that this issue be discussed by the Council. The Director advised the Council that once 20 year rule work is completed a new Historical Collections Team will be established in order to work on the Land Commission records (fair rents scheme) currently in storage.

The Director commented that it was necessary for both the National Archives and the Department of Agriculture to ensure that ultimately records transfer across to the National Archives so that work can commence on making them available to the public.

6. AOB

The Chair enquired about the status of replacing the current Council once the term concludes on 19th July. The Director advised that it was currently with the Public Appointments Service and once the Minister had made any re-appointments that the remaining vacancies would be advertised on stateboards.ie

The Council expressed its hope that there wouldn't be a long delay in establishing a new Council.

Finally The Chair thanked the members for their hard work over the last 5 years and that he had both enjoyed and learned a lot from their meetings.

There was no further business.