

Meeting of The National Archives Advisory Council

26th April 2022

Present: Mr. John Hedigan, (Chair), Dr. Hiram Morgan, Mr. Kieran Hoare, Mr. Michael Nolan, Dr. Natalie Harrower, Mr. John Grenham, Dr. Elizabeth Mullins, Professor Deirdre Raftery, Ms. Catriona Mulcahy.

Apologies: Dr. Ciara Breathnach, Comdt. Stephen Mac Eoin, Mr. Brian McGee

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

1. Minutes of Meeting on 15th February

The minutes were approved for web publication.

2. Matters Arising

It was queried whether there had been any acknowledgement received of the letter sent to Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the 1st March 2022.

The Director advised that hitherto only a standard response acknowledging receipt of the letter had been received.

3. Update from The Director

The Director updated the Council on the following:

- Covid 19
- Staffing
- Capital Spending
- Commemorations Programme
- National Centre for Research and Remembrance

There was a discussion about the reasons why Belfast had not been initially included as a venue for the National Treaty Tour Exhibition. It was agreed that discussions could possibly

take place later in the year with PRONI with a view to bringing the tour to Belfast and Derry. The Director also advised that The Exhibition would be brought to The National Ploughing Championships in September as requested by The Taoiseach.

In relation to staffing there was also a query answered about safety in the workplace and any reviews carried out by the Department regarding working from home.

An observation was made surrounding the possibly controversial nature of the establishment of the new National Centre for Research and Remembrance. The Director advised that the National Archives remit was solely to ensure all records would be made available and also noted that there would have to be significant changes in legislation to ensure that recent records could be made available in a timely manner.

Regarding the Genealogy section of the NA website it was queried if there were any plans for improvements. The Director advised that small remedial improvements were being made on an interim basis for 1901 and 1911 records and that there were plans for more serious improvements to be made in the run up to the release of 1926 records in 2026.

4. Annual Report

It was agreed that the 18 month report for 2021 / 2022 would be published once the current term of the Council ends in July. It was agreed that Kieran would lead the drafting of the report with collaboration from Ciara, Elizabeth and John. The draft will then be circulated to all members for suggestions, comments and additions / amendments before being finalised in the final Council meeting in June.

5. NAAC Event 12th May

The structure of the event was discussed and will be finalised in the meeting between the National Archives and the Courts Service on the 27th April. It was

advised that there would be space for only 30 people on-site at the event and for any members interested in attending to contact Simon Willmott.

The Promotion and advertising of the event was discussed and it was advised that The NA would advertise on social media which has worked well in promoting recent events.

6. AOB

It was agreed that the Council should include a statement of its support for the establishment of the National Centre for Research and Remembrance and for the role of The National Archives in same.

The NAAC welcomes the recent announcement of plans to create a National Centre for Research and Remembrance to honour all those who were resident in Mother and Baby Homes, Industrial Schools, Reformatories, Magdalen Laundries and related institutions. The NAAAC also welcomes the central role given to the National Archive of Ireland in the professional management of the archival records linked to the proposed repository. It notes the need for the allocation of additional resources to support this as part of the planning process.

Finally The Chair thanked all members for their contributions over the current term and welcomed the fact that some members had expressed an interest in serving in the next Council. He remarked that despite their limited powers they had achieved a lot in terms of “pushing the boat out”.

There was no other business.