

MEETING OF HISTORIC WORKING GROUP

Thursday, 7th September, 2017

Members present: Councillor Heading (Chairperson);
Aldermen Rodgers and Spence;
Councillors Hargey, Hutchinson, Kyle,
and Long.

In attendance: Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager;
Mr. C. Bradley, Tourism Cultural Heritage
and Arts Development Officer;
Mr. R. Heslip, Tourism Cultural Heritage
and Arts Development Officer; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Dudgeon.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

List of Potential Historical Commemoration Events and Decade of Centenaries Programme

The Working Group agreed to consider the two aforementioned items together.

The Working Group was reminded that, at its last meeting, it had agreed that a report be submitted regarding a list of potential historical events that could be commemorated over the next few years and that Members of the Group would forward any events they wished to be included in this list for discussion to Democratic Services.

With the permission of the Chairperson, the Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Officer tabled the following list of potential commemorative events in 2018:

1968

- **Civil Rights Association formed 27th January, 1967;**
- **People's Democracy formed 9th October, 1968;**
- **Death of William Conor; and**
- **Lynch – O'Neill talks.**

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1918

- **End of World War I 11th November, 1918 ;**
- **‘Spanish ‘Flu’ – suggested that it killed as many as 40 million people worldwide, mainly in 1918. Estimated that as many as 800,000 people Ireland may have been infected in two waves – the second being more virulent and particularly affected young fit people. One estimate of deaths is 27,000. Becomes seen as an ‘epidemic’ in June, 1918 in Belfast;**
- **6th February, 1918 - Representation of the People Act passed, which widened male franchise and also meant that some women could vote in parliamentary elections for the first time. On 21st November the Parliamentary Qualification of Women Act meant that women could stand for, and be elected to, Parliament for the first time;**
- **A General Election was held on 14th December, 1918;**
- **Countess Markievicz became the first woman elected to Parliament, though she did not take her seat. She was born in 1868;**
- **First women police appointed in Belfast – from both sections of the community; and**
- **Aldergrove established as an air base; and**
- **Born 1918 in Belfast:**
 - **Markey (David Marcus) Robinson - 7th February (died 1998)**
 - **Jimmy Young - 23rd June**
 - **Chaim Herzog - 17th September.**

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1868

- **Constance Gore-Booth (Countess Markievicz) was born on 4th February, 1868;**
- **James Connolly was born on 5th June, 1868;**
- **The organisation that became the Salvation Army was formed on 5th July, 1868.**

1818

- **First steam ship service from the Clyde to Belfast.**

1768

- **First theatre in Belfast and foundation of the Belfast Musical Society.**

1718

- **First major emigration to North America from Ireland. Having been turned away from Boston because of being Irish, the emigrants settled in Maine, where there will be commemorations next year.**

1918 was a very active year in the war, with a major German offensive 'Operation Michael' in March 1918 that included what is sometimes called the Second Battle of the Somme and drove the Allies back. In May and June the Germans also broke through in Champagne and were able to advance.

July – early August the Second Battle of the Marne started with early German success, followed by Allied counter attacks which drove them back. There were 160,000 Allied casualties, against 110,000 German, however. 8 – 11 August the Battle of Amiens produced the largest one day advance since 1914 – 8 miles and heavy German casualties. The German High Command realised that they no longer had any hope of winning the war.

The Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Officer explained that the list had been compiled based on events that had taken place primarily in Belfast and those which had strong historical links to Belfast.

A Member pointed out that the Good Relations Section had previously compiled an outline programme of events regarding potential anniversaries to commemorate for the forthcoming years and it would be helpful to add these to the aforementioned list to ensure a co-ordinated Council approach, so that events could be considered in clusters instead of individually.

During discussion, Members raised the importance of a realistic, consistent approach to the events programme, based upon the previously agreed principles. It was

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emphasised that any proposal for an event that required a budget would require agreement by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. It was suggested that, in principle, an overarching plan would be required for the next 5 years of commemorative events, however, it was noted that for those events which would take place in the next Council Term, approval and funding commitment would need to be taken forward by the succeeding Council.

A Member also suggested that research on possible future events should not just include academic input but explore other perspectives and community connections. The Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Officer suggested that links and partnerships with appropriate external agencies could also be considered, such as the Public Records Office Northern Ireland.

During further discussion, the replacement of the Blue Plaque for Chaim Herzog was raised. The Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Officer advised that a meeting had been organised with the Ulster History Circle and he would report back on any updates regarding this, along with information on any previous discussion that had taken place by the Council regarding the issue.

The Working Group agreed that the outline programme of events, previously compiled by Good Relations, be circulated to the Group and a report be submitted to a future meeting to include:

- a full list of Potential Historical Commemoration Events to be considered over the next five years, to be compiled in a two stem approach of those events which were included in the Decade of Centenaries and those which were not;
- the addition of the aforementioned Good Relations outline programme of events for consideration and any other forthcoming commemorative events which had been previously agreed by the Council; and
- the agreed set of principles that should apply to any key anniversaries being marked by the Council and the potential to outreach and partner with appropriate external agencies.

The Working Group also agreed to submit any events they wish to be included in this list for discussion to Democratic Services.

**50th Anniversary of the formation of the Civil Rights Movement (Councillor
Heading to raise)**

The Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Officer advised that he had explored the potential of this anniversary and highlighted that the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) formed on 27th January, 1967 and the People's Democracy had formed on 9th October, 1968.

During discussion, it was pointed out that events such as this required a sensitive approach and should be considered in the wider context of the period.

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The Working Group noted that this had been included in the list of potential commemorative events and agreed that other local organisations would be contacted to ascertain their plans for the forthcoming 50th anniversary.

External Expertise

The Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Officer advised that, in the future, it might be helpful if the Working Group had access to external historical expertise in an advisory capacity, such as the Ulster Commemorative Society for Irish History Studies.

The Working Group agreed that this would be considered once a programme of events had been agreed to.

European Year of Cultural Heritage

The Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Officer reminded the Group that Tourism NI had expressed an interest in the tourism potential of a possible programme of events for the European Year of Cultural Heritage, 2018. He advised that he had met with representatives of Tourism NI and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency regarding the potential for the Council to participate in such events and advised that there might be potential for the funding of events in the near future.

The Working Group noted that they would be kept up to date with any progress on the plans for the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

Chairperson