

Title of Report: Report on the plans for the Centenary of Northern Ireland	Officer Presenting: Head of Culture Author: Curator
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To provide a report on the current plans for the Centenary of Northern Ireland in 2021 in this Council area.

2 Background

- 2.1 On the 3 May 2021 – it is the 100th anniversary of the foundation of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is one of the four countries of the United Kingdom, (although it is also described by official sources as a province or a region). It was created as a separate legal entity on 3 May 1921, under the Government of Ireland Act 1920 following the partition of Ireland.
- 2.2 In August 2020 the UK Prime Minister announced plans to establish a Centenary Forum, and a Centenary Historical Advisory Panel as part of the Government’s plans to mark 100 years since the creation of Northern Ireland, and the formation of the United Kingdom as we know it today.
- 2.3 The Community Relations Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund Northern Ireland have been leading on discussions with local Councils to explore ideas and plans for this commemoration. There is agreement that the Centenary event must uphold the Principles of Commemoration as set out in the Decades of Anniversaries Toolkit developed in partnership with CRC and NLHF in order to inform upcoming events related to the Decades of Anniversaries. These are:
 1. Start from the historical **facts**
 2. Recognise the **implications** and **consequences** of what happened
 3. Understand that different **perceptions** and **interpretations** exist and
 4. Show how events and activities can deepen **understanding** of the period
 5. All to be seen in the context of an **‘inclusive and accepting society’**

- 2.4 The Northern Ireland Office have set up a Centenary Forum and Centenary Historical Advisory Panel to help shape the programme of events to mark this important national anniversary for the entire United Kingdom. The Historical Advisory Panel will provide expert insight on the historical facts and themes of this period, encouraging wider engagement with, and reflection on, our shared history. The first meeting of the forum has taken place via video conference on the 4 September.
- 2.5 2021 is also a significant year in particular for this Council area with other important historical anniversary dates as it marks the 1500th anniversary of the birth of Colmcille and it will be the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the Armada ship, La Trinidad Valencera.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 Since 2016 the Tower Museum has been involved with the Peace IV funded Creative Centenaries Project. The Museum Service has delivered the following exhibitions and programmes:
- 1916 Exhibition
 - Making History Exhibition
 - Dividing Ireland Exhibition
- 3.2 The current exhibition in the Tower Museum - Dividing Ireland: The Origins, Impact & Legacy of Partition examines the period of history from 1920-25 & Partition using archive/objects linked to local content and supported by a community engagement programme. The exhibition is free and runs from 14 July 2020 – 28 February 2021.
- 3.3 As part of this programme, the Museum Service will have a temporary exhibition available to borrow over the next number of years. There has been interest in this travelling exhibition and Fermanagh & Omagh Council/Enniskillen Museum have already booked. The Museum Service have plans to upload a digital/virtual format of the exhibition onto the Tower Museum website.
- 3.4 Due to current situation of Covid19 – the Museum Service has focused on the delivery of content online and a taster of the exhibition can be found on: <https://towermuseumcollections.com/dividing-ireland/>
- 3.5 The Museum Service is also working with Holywell Trust on a Community Engagement Project - *'Borderland - A Changing & Physical Landscape'*

- This is funded by our DCSDC Community Relations Department
- It will target representatives from the community who are currently or have been impacted directly by the presence of the border and changes that have taken place both socially and economically in the past 100 years.
- It is envisaged that this project will create a legacy of recorded public opinion that will be regularly accessed by those wishing to study the border for many years to come.

There are two aims of project:

1. The creation of an Oral History Archive & Video highlighting contemporary perspectives by engaging with ex-prisoners & local history groups (This is funded by The Executive Office through our Good Relations Action Plan)
 2. The creation of an exhibition for display in 2021 to coincide with the anniversary of the formation of Northern Ireland
- 3.6 The Exhibition will be displayed from May – July 2021 to coincide with key anniversary dates and officers are currently scoping out options for location within the Strabane area.
- 3.7 DCSDC Heritage Venues Group which consists of local museum and heritage organisations have also begun to discuss and explore options for the event which officers would include in any overall programme.
- 3.8 The Centenary event offers a real opportunity to explore a shared experience – on all sides and to promote Northern Ireland from a positive perspective – its culture, arts/literature/sport etc. Local councils can also share existing resources through their museums - collections, expertise and supportive networks in particular on learning and training.
- 3.9 DCSDC will participate in ongoing discussions to determine if there is opportunity for additional programming and mutual linkages as part of the planning for this event.
- 3.10 It is envisaged that despite the current restrictions that the existing funding streams for cultural, good relations and community activity will go ahead. Should any of these be based or themed on the centenary of any of the other commemorative dates Council will be in position to programme them as part of an annual themed programme.
- 3.11 2020-2021 marks the 1500th anniversary of the birth of Colmcille. DCSDC & Donegal County Council, UU and its partners are holding a year of events to recognize the

importance of this saint not only for our city and district but also for Ireland, Scotland and the world. This programme is funded by the North West Development Fund, Donegal County Council and Derry City & Strabane District Council.

- 3.12 As part of the Museum Service offer to recognize this significant heritage date officers within the service are currently working with Donegal County Museum on the research for the development of an exhibition which will form a central part of the year's activity to commemorate the 1500th anniversary of Colmcille. The exhibition will be displayed in the Tower Museum for six months (April – August 2021) before travelling to Donegal County Museum for a further six-month period (Sept 2021– Feb 2022).
- 3.13 The 20 February 2021 is the 50th Anniversary of the finding of La Trinidad Valencera, the Armada ship found in Kinnegoe Bay, Co. Donegal by the City of Derry Sub-Aqua Club. Discussions have begun with stakeholders in the development of an event to highlight this significant date. Officers are currently scoping out plans with Greencastle Maritime Museum, Inishowen, Co. Donegal and other stakeholders to align resources and work in partnership with them.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement, Rural Needs and other Implications

- 4.1 Budget is available within existing Museum Service Programme and provided through the Good Relations Action Plan for the 100 Years Centenary of Northern Ireland Programme as outline above. There is also some discussion that there may be available budget to local Councils and community groups provided by NIO as part of the planned commemorations. Should this become available officers will bring back a further report to members with recommendations following consultation with the Decade of Centenaries working group. Officers will programme any activity in an overall programme.
- 4.2 Colmcille 1500 Exhibition & programme is a joint partnership project with Donegal County Council with a total cost of £25,000 with £5,000 from each council and £15,000 from the Department of Culture Heritage & the Gaeltacht – Co-operation with Northern Ireland Funding Scheme.
- 4.3 The 50th Anniversary event for the finding of La Trinidad Valencera – budgets are allocated within existing Museum Service Programme 2020-21.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members note the content of the report on the current DCSDC plans for the Centenary of Northern Ireland in 2021 and that officers will bring back a further report should there be confirmation of external funding.

5.2 A meeting of the Decade of Centenaries Working Group is convened to discuss these proposals in further detail and bring a subsequent report back to committee.

Background Papers