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DECADE OF ANNIVERSARIES

Highlights of a Review of Decade of Centenaries 2012-2023



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Highlights of a Review of Decade of Centenaries 2012-2023

Background

The Community Relations Council (CRC) and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) are engaged in a conversation about the issues involved in remembering in public space during the centenary anniversaries of 2012-2023. A focus of these discussions has been on supporting new ways to engage with the anniversaries of historically important events to ensure that the region's divided past does not undermine our ability to live well together in the future. CRC and HLF convene the Decade Roundtable, which includes a wide range of public and voluntary sector bodies, academics, artists and others working on any aspect of commemoration related to this period. The Principles for Remembering in Public Space developed in 2011 have been widely endorsed by Ministers, councils, culture, heritage organisations and community groups have assisted agencies and organisations at all levels to navigate through this period. Our aspirations about the potential gain through exploring the decade of centenaries remain diverse.

As society engages with the legacies of this revolutionary period there is potential to reinforce the development of political and civic culture –

engaging with culture and identity, rights. We can explore what we mean by democracy and the nature of political change, increase understanding of commemoration and ensure the marking of the centenaries does not become divisive or reinforce division. We may also be able to acknowledge the legacy of the decade and support engagement with the complexity of our history.

Purpose

This briefing note sets out the main findings of the Decade of Centenaries Survey. The purpose of the survey was learn about current experience and practice, the methodologies used and programmes delivered. We sought to find out about future plans and what (if any) information or support needs there are. We wished to examine the role played by the principles and the usefulness/knowledge of the resources, guidance, and the various information and networking events. The survey was undertaken over 6 weeks in early 2017. CRC/HLF commissioned a previous survey in 2014.

Response: Review of the Decade of Centenaries 2017 Survey undertaken by Stratagem

The response rate to the electronic survey conducted in 2017 was 38%. The Community and Voluntary Sector made up 49% of respondents, followed by District Council (16%), 'Other' (11%), Arm's Length Bodies (9%) and Education (8%). Of respondents, 70% had marked a significant anniversary within the previous six – twelve months

Impact: Key Findings

70%, reported increased learning in relation to commemoration and or contested histories was the overall effect of marking the centenaries on organisations.

Impacts for Society

What are we achieving through the decade related work, responding to the following statements:

84% reported, It's important to understand the context about what really happened.

79% reported, We acknowledge and respect that not everyone sees the past in the way we do.

67% reported, We see the reality of how our past influences our present and future.



65%, We acknowledge the implications of what happened.

63%, We work towards being inclusive in how we mark the anniversaries.

61%, We are mindful of the legacy of the Decade of Centenaries in terms of reconciliation.

40%, We engage with the historical dialogue in order to produce/develop shared narratives.

35%, reported, lower community tensions.

How has the decade been marked to date?

Respondents recorded the highest level of agreement with the statements they have been held across both communities, and a lot of activity has been visible and there has been mature reflection.

Impact for participants

Organisations believed that participants found the events to be thought provoking (75%), it produced multiple stories (50%) and there was an increase in the number of participants who have a greater awareness of different cultures and feel comfortable acknowledging and respecting cultural diversity (52%).

68%, learnt something new and it helped explore shared experiences. It inspired participants to explore the Decade further (66%). 55% reported, an increase in number

of people who now have good or very good knowledge of the period 1912 – 1918 in British and Irish history, and participants are now more open to listening to and exploring some discussion with others who have diverse and opposing opinions (50%).

43% believe that “it made them truly reflective”, while 39% respectively found “it was innovative in terms of content and delivery” and “they had a greater understanding of a shared community as a direct result of shared history 1916/1918 course.

Impact for organisations

Events targeted a wide range of audiences, mainly the public (75%), community groups/associations (68%) and cross-community/inclusive initiatives (50%), local district council area, and schools, 36% respectively.

Respondents reported that the overall effect of marking the centenaries on their organisations

Increased our learning in relation to commemoration and/or contested histories and increased our outreach into the community, 70% respectively. Other respondents stated it attracted new audiences and enabled greater collaborative/partnership

working, 67% respectively. We experimented and learned more about how to mark sensitive anniversaries in an inclusive way (42%).

In addition, the role of volunteers in reaching wider communities and built museum collections through the programme’ was a major effect of marking the centenaries on their organisation. Respondents’ comments were overwhelmingly positive about the events attended, emphasising inclusive, partnership, and quality, shared and open-minded.

Approaches and activities: Key Findings

The majority of organisations took the approach to “aim to increase understanding” in regards to marking or supporting to mark significant centenaries (89%). 66%, sought to find partners to collaborate with and/or aimed to include multiple stories. 59% approached the decade aiming to develop a thematic and inclusive approach and/or to focus on anniversaries that have a significant local connection.



From an extensive list of activities, visual arts and exhibitions] (66%) worked best for organisations as well as *dialogue and discussion-workshops and panel discussions (61%) and lecture series (61%)*. 50%, of organisations felt *local history- human stories and complexities worked for them, while 48% stated that drama worked for their organisation. Storytelling (41%), site visits (38%), show and tell (18%), music/song memorial book (16%), while 11% stated that parades worked.*

Significant anniversaries that were marked - 82%, *First World War in the last five years followed by 77%, the Battle of the Somme and 75%, the Easter Rising*. Personalities of the Decade (48%), Ulster Covenant (59%) Home Rule (57%), and twentieth century Ireland (36%). Labour (23%) and women (50%) were marked include to a lesser degree.

Nine % of organisations stated 'Other' anniversaries were marked and responses included: *Balmoral Review, Importation of guns and Ulster Division March Past the City Hall, as well as The Eastern Front and East Belfast men who fought there, Ulster Volunteers; Ulster Plantation*

Reconsidered and 'Other services in WWI such as Medical, Naval etc.'

Use of Principles, Networks and Resources: Key Findings

Principles and Resources

Of the organisations that responded 57% did not have an official policy, framework or principles for marking centenaries. Those that responded found the following resources were beneficial, informative or relevant: *CRC/HLF Principles of Remembering in Public Space* ("start with the facts" etc.) (93%), *Decade of Anniversaries Toolkit* (2013) (74%), *Remembering the Future Conference Publication* (2012) (66%) and the *Titanic and Ulster Museum Resource Fairs* (2016) (64%), *Remembering the Future Lecture series* (2012) and *Discussion Paper* (2011) (59% respectively).

Other Resources produced and used included

Creative Centenaries and Nerve Centre eBooks, touchscreen platforms, graphic novels Personalities of the Decade Dockers and Doffers Library men of WW1 DVD of Halfway House Drama

PRONI online Resources
On the Brink Learning Resource
Films, archives, booklets

Some respondents are also keen to find out more about the Roundtable and resources available.

Planning Ahead

Organisations indicated what they are currently planning. Broadly, the most numerous topics are: violence, pacts, elections, and parliaments (53 mentions), *The Battle of Messines* (13) and end of First World War in Europe (17 mentions), post war life for families, returned soldiers and workers (10), gender class and ethnic minorities (27 mentions). Others reported include survival and resilience (4), rural and cross border (3), policing (2). There are correctly no reported plans to address the Spanish flu of 1918.

Within the larger grouping of violence, pacts, elections, and parliaments, numbers of respondents are planning to mark *The King's Speech (1921) and Northern Ireland Parliament (11 respondents), Sectarian violence (1920-1922) and the Craig Collins Pact (10)*. *Nine respondents are planning to mark*



the Irish Convention (1917-1918) to the Government of Ireland Act (1920) and Partition (1922) and 9 are planning around various aspects of the 1918 general election.

The CRC/HLF Decade Roundtable

The future role or actions necessary to support marking centenaries were reported as follows:

*77%, information sharing and networking role
63%, encouraging co-operation and collaboration
56%, promoting good practice,
53% promoting inclusivity,
53%, engaging government agencies and stakeholders,
49%, providing resources e.g. publications, video and the toolkit, promoting a framework in which to mark centenaries and guidance and information on themes and approaches respectively.
39% provide an opportunity for practitioners to reflect, accessing artefacts, speakers, drama etc., and providing guiding principles.*

Additional comments made by individual respondents included investment in risk taking and challenging work and encouraging networking with specialists such as museums and

academics. Reflecting or acknowledging specific events should be from the grassroots in both communities.

In addition, respondents reported that more support in terms of finance and staff (63%), public relations and communication (58%), commitment to inclusive delivery (58%) and greater guidance from government (50 and 53%) would also be of assistance in marking anniversaries. Frameworks for north south (47%) and east west co-operation (18%) would also assist delivery.

Measuring Success

When asked about how success will be measured, comments included such approaches as qualitative analysis, through to gauging if we are better able to ask different, more in depth questions when commemoration arises in the future, to outcomes such as that people acknowledge and respect cultural diversity more, improved relationships, and continued interest with greater and diverse engagement.

Acknowledgments

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Access the full report at
<https://www.community-relations.org.uk/news-centre/review-decade-centenaries-2012-2023-report>



Principles

The principles for remembering in public space 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'**

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