



BRITISH-IRISH PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
TIONÓL PARLAIMINTEACH NA BREATAINE AGUS NA HÉIREANN

Committee A: Sovereign Matters

Decade of Commemorations

Introduction

1. The Decade of Commemorations, also known as the Decade of Centenaries, refers to the period from 2012 to 2022 which sees the centenary anniversaries of a series of key events which took place between 1912 and 1922, and which shaped the history of British-Irish relations until the present day. These anniversaries include, but are not limited to, the introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill in Westminster, the signing of the Ulster Covenant, the formation of the Ulster Volunteers, the Dublin Lockout, the formation of the Irish Volunteers, the Larne and Howth gun-runnings, the outbreak of the First World War, the Battles of Gallipoli, the Somme and Messines, the 1916 Rising, the Armistice, the Representation of the People Act 1918 (extending the franchise to women), the War of Independence/Anglo-Irish War, the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the partition of Ireland and the establishment of Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State.
2. A number of other significant anniversaries also arise in the period 2012 to 2022, including the 1000th anniversary of the Battle of Clontarf, the 400th anniversaries of the construction of the Walls of Derry/Londonderry and the granting of a Royal Charter to the City of Belfast and the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. In addition, the end of the decade will see the 50th anniversaries of the events leading to the Troubles in Northern Ireland.
3. It is accepted that sensitivities arise in relation to some, if not all, of the anniversaries listed. Concerns have been raised that the manner in which the anniversaries are marked, primarily, but not exclusively, in Northern Ireland may fuel tensions between different communities. A related view exists that the commemoration of the 50th anniversaries of the events in question in the 1960s may have contributed to the environment from which the Troubles emerged later in the decade (although the extent of the causal relationship is strongly disputed). In particular, there is a fear that certain groups opposed to the progress made under the Peace Process in recent years may attempt to exploit the anniversaries to project a negative message and further division between the communities in Northern Ireland.
4. Already in 2012, significant work has already taken place in marking the anniversaries arising in the course of the year, and in preparing for future commemorations. The Irish Government has established a tripartite advisory structure for its commemorative programme for the decade (details below). To mark the anniversaries of the Home Rule Crisis/Ulster Covenant, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade hosted Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson in March 2012, to deliver the Edward Carson Lecture at Iveagh House in Dublin. In this

lecture, which was preceded by an historical discussion between Lord Bew and Professor Michael Laffan, the First Minister reflected on the legacy of Carson and on the future direction of Irish Unionism. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Reconciliation and Anti-Sectarianism Fund also supported a series of exhibitions in the County Museums of Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan on the signatories of the Ulster Covenant in those counties, and an academic conference on the Covenant in King's College London in September 2012.

5. The Northern Ireland Office produced an exhibition to mark the centenary of the introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill, which was displayed in Westminster Hall in March 2012, and which was subsequently displayed in Leinster House, Dublin during the BIPA Plenary meeting in May 2012, and in the National Library of Ireland.
6. The joint statement on the next decade of British-Irish relations, issued by the Prime Minister and Taoiseach in March 2012 states that: “2012 marks the beginning of a decade of centenary commemorations of events that helped shape our political destinies. This series of commemorations offers us an opportunity to explore and reflect on key episodes of our past. We will do so in a spirit of historical accuracy, mutual respect, inclusiveness and reconciliation”.
7. In March 2012, the Northern Ireland Executive issued a statement¹ confirming that it had decided to take a lead role in organising events for the Decade of Commemorations. Noting the significance of the events of the decade of 1912 – 1922, the Executive agreed that the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure would jointly bring forward a programme for the decade. The statement further noted that Ministers agreed that it was appropriate and necessary for the Executive to set the tone and provide leadership in putting an official acknowledgement process in place.
8. A large number of conferences and lectures related to the decade of commemorations have been organised by a wide range of organisations over the course of the past year. The British Irish Association 2011 annual conference, in Cambridge, was devoted to the issue of commemorations. Other initiatives organised include the Remembering the Future Lecture Series organised by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and Heritage Lottery Fund in Belfast, a debate on the Ulster Covenant in

¹ <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/executive-statements/executive-statement-on-decade-of-centenaries.htm>

Berry Street Presbyterian Church in March, organised by Féile an Earraigh 2012, ‘Sober Reflections’, a one-day conference on the Ulster Covenant organised by the Church of Ireland at Moira Parish Centre in March, ‘Citizenship, Covenant and Christ’, a conference on the Ulster Covenant organised by the Presbyterian Church at Belfast City Hall, the inaugural John Redmond Lecture hosted by Waterford City Council at Waterford City Hall, ‘The Home Rule Crisis: Centenary Perspectives’ at the National Library of Ireland in Dublin, ‘Reflecting on a decade of War and Revolution in Ireland 1912 – 1923: Historians and Public History’ organised by Universities Ireland and the Centre for Cross Border Studies at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin, ‘1916: What It Means’ organised by the Keogh-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin and ‘The Ulster Covenant and Contemporary Ireland’ organised by the Institute for British Irish Studies and The Irish Association at the Linenhall Library in Belfast.

9. Belfast City Council produced an exhibition entitled “Shared History – Different Allegiances”, covering the history of Belfast in the context of the significant historical events of the period 1912 – 1914. The exhibition includes photographs, archive film footage and other artefacts. To complement the exhibition, the Council also organised a programme of events, including lectures and dramas around the events of 1912, with particular reference to the Ulster Covenant. The City Council has indicated that it intends to focus on the role of women, female suffrage and the labour movement in 2013.
10. The City Council also established a Historic Centenaries Working Group on the Council, chaired by Councillor Máire Hendron, to consider the issues arising for the Council from the upcoming anniversaries. This group was subsequently expanded with the addition of the Council Party Group leaders to form the Joint Group of the Party Group Leaders and former Historic Centenaries Working Group. It considers specific centenaries related issues, and determines broad policy in this area, which serves as guidance for other relevant groups and committees on specific proposals.
11. It was in this context the Committee A (Sovereign Matters) of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly agreed, at a Committee meeting in Brighton in October 2011, to undertake an inquiry into the Decade of Commemorations. At the Committee’s next meeting, in January 2012 in London, members agreed that the inquiry should be limited to centenary events only. Furthermore, the Committee agreed that shared events would be covered by the inquiry, but sovereign events would not.

12. Over the course of four hearings, on 30 January 2012 in London, 23 April 2012 in Dublin, 9 July 2012 in London and 15 October 2012 in Belfast, the Committee met with Professor Roy Foster, Carroll Professor of Irish History at Hertford College Oxford, Mr. John Kennedy, Principal Officer at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dr. Maurice Manning, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Commemorations, Ms. Deirdre McBride, Community Relations Council, Ms. Stella McDermott, Heritage Lottery Fund, Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, Rt. Hon. Hugo Swire M.P., Dr. Andrew Murrison, M.P., Stephen Gough, Mark Cosgrove and Cllr. Lee Reynolds, Unionist Centenaries Committee, Harry Donaghy, Brendan Mackin, Joe Bowers and Billy McQuiston, Fellowship of Messines Association, Sean O'Hare and Sean Curry, 6th Connaught Rangers Research Project, and from Belfast City Council Lord Mayor Gavin Robinson, Cllr. Máire Hendron, Cllr. Tim Atwood, Cllr. Lee Reynolds, Cllr. Jim Rogers, Cllr. Tom Ekin, Mr. Peter McNaney CEO and Ms. Hazel Francey, Good Relations Officer.
13. The Committee would like to express its sincere gratitude to all those who gave their time to attend hearings and contribute evidence to the inquiry. This report summarises the evidence provided at the hearings, and provides operational conclusions and recommendations.

Professor Roy Foster

14. Professor Foster is Carroll Professor of Irish History at Hertford College, Oxford, and is author of numerous works on Irish history, including *Charles Stewart Parnell: The Man and His Family*, *Lord Randolph Churchill: A political Life*, *Modern Ireland 1600 – 1972*, *Paddy and Mr. Punch: Connections in Irish and English History*, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making It Up in Ireland*, *Luck and the Irish: A Brief History of Change* and the two volume authorised biography of W.B. Yeats.
15. Professor Foster expressed the view that commemoration of the past was primarily a political and economic, rather than historical, activity. He referred to previous commemorations of the Irish Famine and of the 1798 rebellion which, in his view, were politicised and historically inaccurate. The role of historians, in Professor Foster's view, was to tease out nuances and ambiguities; to analyse rather than identify or empathise with the past. Commemoration, by contrast, was an exercise in empathy rather than history.
16. In discussion, members agreed on the need for politicians to engage actively in the commemorative process, to ensure that the coming anniversaries are not solely exploited in a negative way by certain interest groups. However, politicians and

political leaders involved in commemorations should ensure that they seek out as broad and sophisticated a range of historical advice as possible.

17. The history of the First World War and, in particular, Irish involvement in the war, was one which until recently was relatively under-appreciated and not understood. It will be important to ensure that the War is central to any understanding and commemoration of the decade in the years ahead, if the commemorations are to foster reconciliation and deepen mutual understanding. The inauguration of the Island of Ireland Peace Park at Messines in Belgium by President McAleese and Queen Elizabeth II in 1998 served to resinsert a large part of Irish experience into the historical memory, and showed how a political public act of commemoration can be historically valuable.

Irish Government Commemorative Programme

18. Mr. John Kennedy is a Principal Officer in the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and attended the hearing on behalf of Minister Jimmy Deenihan, T.D., the Irish Government Minister with primary responsibility for the commemorative programme.

19. Mr. Kennedy outlined the structures which the Irish government had put in place to oversee the commemorative programme for the decade. Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan T.D. chaired an all-party Oireachtas consultation group on commemorations, which met on a regular basis to consider upcoming events and to meet with various interest groups involved in commemorative activity. An academic advisory group chaired by Dr. Maurice Manning, had also been established, which would assist the Government over the course of the decade. Finally, a senior level official group, consisting of the Secretaries General of the Departments of the Taoiseach, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Education and Science and Defence, the Chairman of the Office of Public Works and the Director of the National Museum had been established to coordinate commemorative policy and activity.

20. From the perspective of the Irish government, commemorative events fall into three broad categories: official events where the Irish Government would have a lead role, supported events, organised by cultural, historical and educational bodies supported by the State and recognised events, including those outside the State or organised by community and other non-governmental organisations. The Government had endorsed an overall approach to commemorations whereby all activity organised or supported by the State would respect historical accuracy, promoted tolerance, respect and

inclusiveness and recognise the All-Island and East/West shared past nature of the decade.

21. In terms of the commemorative programme itself, the centenary of the 1916 Rising would be central. However, a range of activities will be organised to mark the anniversaries arising in 2012 (e.g. the Home Rule crisis and the Ulster Covenant). Commemoration of the First World War would constitute a distinct strand of the official programme, with activities envisaged around key anniversaries: the outbreak of the War (2014), the Battle of Gallipoli (2015), the Battle of the Somme (2016), the Battle of Messines Ridge (2017), the Armistice (2018).

22. Dr. Maurice Manning is the Chair of an Advisory Committee of historians established by the Irish Government in March 2012 for the purpose of generating an awareness of the commemorative programme, bring forward suggestions for activity, and provide advice on suggestions received. The Committee was primarily tasked with supporting the Government, in particular liaising with the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, but would hope to meet with other interested groups and organisations. The Committee would work, in the first instance, to prepare a comprehensive statement on its aims and role, which would inform the development and implementation of the official commemorative programme during the period.

Community Relations Council/Heritage Lottery Fund

23. Ms. Deirdre McBride is Programme Director for Cultural Diversity at the Community Relations Council. Ms. Stella McDermott is Casework Manager at the Heritage Lottery Fund. Both are based in Belfast and addressed the Committee jointly.

24. Ms. McBride and Ms. McDermott outlined the work of the CRC and HLF on the decade of commemorations, noting the particular sensitivities in Northern Ireland around the upcoming anniversaries, as well as the potential inherent in the commemorations for fostering reconciliation. The CRC and HLF had been working since 2010 on a set of principles for public and other funding bodies which would be supporting commemorative activity which should underpin public commemorations. Those principles were: 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, all to be seen in the context of an 'inclusive and accepting society'. Work was also at an advanced stage on the development of a set of resource materials

on the decade of commemorations, and a lecture series entitled ‘Remembering the Future’ had already begun in Belfast.

25. The Committee noted the importance, stressed by Ms. McBride and Ms. McDermott, of the need for official bodies to engage with the local community on commemorations at grassroots level and, in particular, the need to develop work in relation to young people. In that regard, cross-border educational initiatives were identified as a priority area for the Irish Government and Northern Ireland Assembly to explore.

UK Government

26. Rt Hon Hugo Swire M.P. was Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office². In addressing the Committee, Minister of State Swire noted the activity already underway during the year to mark the anniversaries arising in 2012, and commended the close working relationship between the NIO and the Irish Government, particularly with Minister Deenihan.

27. The Committee supported Minister of State Swire’s proposal for a shared website on commemorations, sponsored by the British and Irish governments. Such a website would be a source of accurate historical information on the events which occurred between 1912 and 1922, and would be moderated by a panel of nominated historians. The website should be targeted particularly at young people, as it would be a valuable educational resource. For this reason, it would be important for both governments to retain oversight on the material to be made available through it.

Dr. Andrew Murrison M.P.

28. Dr. Murrison is Prime Minister Cameron’s Special Representative and Coordinator for World War I Commemorations, and was broadly responsible for drawing up plans for how the UK Government would mark the anniversaries of the War. The single focus of the Government’s approach would be remembrance. The intention was to avoid political agendas around the anniversaries. However, there would be a diplomatic element to commemoration, and the UK had a particularly close relationship with Commonwealth states and with Ireland in that context.

² Minister of State Swire was appointed as Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in September 2012, subsequent to his meeting with the Committee. He was replaced at the Northern Ireland Office by Mr. Mike Penning M.P.

29. The Committee noted the work of Mr. Murrison and supported his view of the importance of ongoing grassroots work on World War I by local history groups and other civil society organisations. The Committee agreed with the need to bring this kind of work together into a single strand.
30. Subsequent to this meeting, Prime Minister Cameron delivered a substantial speech³ at the Imperial War Museum in London on 11 October 2012 on British Government plans to mark the centenary of the First World War. The Prime Minister stated that approximately £50million would be allocated to the commemorations, including the renovation of the Imperial War Museum, support (through the Heritage Lottery Fund) to community heritage projects and a centenary education programme which would allow secondary school pupils to research people who served in the War and subsequently visit battlefield sites. The Prime Minister also announced the establishment of an advisory board chaired by the Secretary of State for Culture, and including Dr. Murrison as well as senior political figures, historians and authors.
31. The Prime Minister also made specific reference to the contribution of Irish soldiers during the war. In a question and answer session after the speech, he noted the scale of participation of volunteers from the island of Ireland to the war effort. He also expressed the hope to visit sites in Belgium with the Taoiseach, and noted the relevance of the history of the War to the reconciliation agenda in Ireland.

Unionist Centenaries Committee

32. The Committee met with Mr. Stephen Gough, Mr. Mark Cosgrove, and Cllr. Lee Reynolds of the Unionist Centenaries Committee (UCC). The UCC Committee is an umbrella organisation comprising a broad range of political, cultural and other organisations from a Unionist/Loyalist background, which was established in 2009 to consider ways to commemorate important centenaries arising in the coming years from a Unionist perspective. The UCC had initially held a wide consultation in early 2011 among various stakeholders and interested parties. It had already arranged major events to mark the centenaries of the Balmoral Review and the signing of the Ulster Covenant. In future years, it would be organising commemorations of the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force, the Larne gun-running, the 36th Ulster Division march past of Belfast City Hall and the Battle of the Somme.
33. In discussion with UCC representatives, Committee members noted the challenges faced by the UCC and congratulated its representatives on their work to date. The

³ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speech-at-imperial-war-museum-on-wwi/>

Committee welcomed the fact that the Ulster Day commemorations in Belfast had passed, by and large, without incident, despite concerns in advance of the event. The Committee noted the importance of the UCC expanding its work, particularly the booklets produced in association with the Ulster Scots community network, into schools, resources permitting. The Committee noted the sensitivities arising in relation to some of the upcoming anniversaries mentioned, although UCC representatives advised that not all anniversaries would be commemorated in the same way. The possibility of a joint exhibition (or parallel exhibitions) on the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish Volunteers was considered by the Committee to be a useful and positive suggestion.

Fellowship of Messines Association and 6th Connaught Rangers Research Project

34. The Committee met with Harry Donaghy, Joe Bowers, Brendan Mackin and Billy McQuiston of the Fellowship of Messines Association and Sean Curry and Sean O'Hare of the 6th Connaught Rangers Research Project.

35. The Fellowship of Messines Association was formed in 2002 following a visit to Messines in Belgium by a group of representatives of communities most seriously affected by the Troubles. The aim of the group, which consists of individuals from Loyalist, Republican, Trade Union and other backgrounds, was to attempt to confront sectarianism in Northern Ireland society. A prominent theme in this work was the interrogation of identities: questioning what makes any individual a unionist, nationalist, loyalist or republican. Among a wide range of activities undertaken by the group were the facilitation of discussion sessions and seminars where historical events, including centenaries of the Home Rule crisis, the First World War and others were used as a way to consider wider questions of identity and allegiance. The intention behind this work was to ignite conversations about different opinions, not just to revisit the past, but to play a positive role in moving debate forward within Northern Irish society.

36. The 6th Connaught Rangers Research Project arose from the Fellowship of Messines Association, but subsequently established itself as a separate organisation. The group had examined family histories of those from a Belfast nationalist background who had relatives who had served in the Connaught Rangers in the First World War. More than 200 separate individuals had been identified, and their stories had been collated in a book produced by the group, in cooperation with a number of writers and experts in the area. The intention was to examine the lives of those who fought in the War, but also, given that much of the history was previously unacknowledged, to use the historical experience as a way of challenging perceived national myths and raising questions about identities today. Since the publication of the book, the group had

given presentations on their work in a range of locations and to different audiences. It had also received contact from a large range of individuals whose relatives had served in regiments other than the Connaught Rangers. The group hoped to be able to follow-up on these contacts in the future.

37. In discussion, the Committee commended the important work of both organisations in the context of the decade of commemorations. It was difficult for the Fellowship of Messines to be specific about the substantial intended outcome of their work; being prescriptive about the future would contradict the actual aims of the project. The importance of the centenaries being marked by local and community groups, not just academic historians, was highlighted. The Committee acknowledged the risk that commemorations might entrench people in “tribal camps”. However, the work of the Fellowship of Messines Association and the 6th Connaught Rangers Research Project demonstrated, in different ways, how sensitive examination of a shared past could serve to further reconciliation in the present.

Belfast City Council

38. The Committee held an exchange of views on the decade of commemorations with members of the Belfast City Council Joint Group of the Party Group Leaders and the former Historic Centenaries Working Group and staff of Belfast City Council (Lord Mayor Gavin Robinson, Cllr. Máire Hendron, Cllr. Tim Atwood, Cllr. Lee Reynolds, Cllr. Jim Rogers, Cllr. Tom Ekin, Mr. Peter McNaney CEO and Ms. Hazel Francey, Good Relations Officer). The Committee commended the City Council’s approach to dealing with the sensitive anniversaries arising, including the good, pragmatic, working relationship which existed between members of the Group. The Committee also commended the exhibition prepared by Belfast City Council on the events of the period 1912 – 1914 entitled “Shared History, Different Allegiances” as a model of a balanced but engaging exhibition on the era.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 39. The Committee commends the work of the various groups – state, civil society and local community – which have been engaged in activities related to the decade of commemorations. It notes that a positive tone of inclusiveness and respect has been set by the majority of these events. The Committee commends the work of the Community Relations Council and Heritage Lottery Fund of Northern Ireland in formalising the principles that should inform how anniversaries over the course of the decade should be marked.**

- 40. The Committee welcomes the fact that despite concerns expressed in advance of the event, the centenary of the signing of the Ulster Covenant in Belfast – the largest-scale centenary commemoration to date - passed peacefully. The Committee commends the work and approach of the Unionist Centenaries Committee, and other organisations involved in commemoration of the signing of the Covenant in a manner intended to deepen mutual understanding, and hopes that this approach will be maintained in the commemoration of future anniversaries.**
- 41. The Committee calls on all groups involved to commemorations to continue to be informed by the principles of historical accuracy, mutual respect and inclusiveness and tolerance for differing perspectives on the past. The Committee stresses the shared, All-Ireland and East-West nature of the events being commemorated, and hopes that these would also inform the commemorative activities.**
- 42. While appreciating the sensitivities around the some of the events of the past among different communities in Britain and Ireland, the Committee endorses the view that careful commemoration of the past can serve to build mutual understanding and foster reconciliation. In this regard, the inauguration of the Island of Ireland Peace Park at Messines in Belgium in 1998 by President McAleese, Queen Elizabeth II and King Albert II, and the programme elements of the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Ireland in 2011 can serve as models for large-scale formal commemorative events. The Committee further calls on the British and Irish Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive to continue to support local and community groups engaged in commemorative activities within the context of reconciliation.**
- 43. The Committee commends the work of organisations such as the Fellowship of Messines Association and the 6th Connaught Rangers Research Project which are among those who are demonstrating, in different ways, how commemoration of the past can prove to be a tool to building mutual understanding and deepening reconciliation between different communities on the island of Ireland. The Committee calls on the British and Irish Governments and other relevant bodies to continue to provide adequate support to work of this nature, as appropriate, over the course of the decade.**
- 44. The Committee endorses the ongoing high-level political dialogue and cooperation on commemorations between the British and Irish Governments and**

the Northern Ireland Executive, and believes that this should continue over the course of the decade. Furthermore, the Committee welcomes the approach taken by Belfast City Council in establishing a cross-party working group to deal with potentially contentious issues arising from the centenaries in an inclusive manner.

- 45. The Committee commends the exhibition produced by Belfast City Council “Shared History, Different Allegiances: Belfast 1912 – 1914”, noting it as a model of a balanced and informative exhibition on the events of the decade, and recommends that the exhibition also be displayed in Dublin and elsewhere, as appropriate.**

- 46. The Committee believes that a greater focus should be given to the East-West element of commemorative activity, particularly at civil society and community level. In this regard, the Committee calls on the British and Irish governments to establish a fund to support joint commemorative activities over the decade. This fund could be used to support a shared decade of commemorations website maintained on a joint basis by the two governments, as well as community and other non-governmental projects with an East-West dimension.**

- 47. The Committee notes the importance of engaging local communities and the creative industries, as well as historians and experts, in the centenary commemorations. The Committee recommends that that British and Irish governments, Northern Ireland Executive and other bodies as appropriate establish an annual commemorations forum seeking to bring together, on an annual basis, a broad range of parties involved in commemorative activity to share their experiences in, and perspectives on, this area of work.**

- 48. The Committee notes, in particular, the importance of engaging the interest of young people in the decade of commemorations and supports educational initiatives with this objective. The Committee, therefore, calls on the relevant education authorities on the island of Ireland to enter into discussion with a view to arranging, on single day on an annual basis, the teaching of the history of a particular anniversary using common educational resources and, as appropriate, cross-border exchanges.**

- 49. The Committee acknowledges the particular resonances many of the anniversaries arising in the course of the decade hold on the island of Ireland. Nevertheless the Committee notes the importance of the decade in the history of all assemblies represented on the BIPA, and would encourage all devolved administrations to bring forward proposals to mark key common anniversaries (including, for example, the anniversary of the extension of the franchise to women).**
- 50. The Committee notes the unique significance of the First World War in the context of a shared British-Irish and all-Ireland exploration of shared history. The Committee acknowledges that the experience of the War had a profound impact, in different ways, on each of the jurisdictions from which members of BIPA are drawn. The Committee recommends that BIPA hold a future plenary meeting at a location close to a First World War battlefield, with the Steering Committee to consider the matter and report back to the plenary meeting in Spring 2013.**
- 51. The Committee welcomes the positive proposals around commemoration of the First World War put forward by Prime Minister Cameron in his speech of 11 October 2012. The Committee believes that the First World War should be a central feature of the Irish Government's programme for the decade of centenary commemorations and that the particular Irish experience of the war should inform the British Government proposals for First World War commemoration. In this regard, and to ensure a consistency of approach, the Committee recommends that the British and Irish Governments bring together representatives of the Academic Advisory Committee to the Irish Government chaired by Dr. Manning and the Advisory Panel of First World War commemorations chaired by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, at an early opportunity, with a view to establishing a joint working group (drawn from members of both bodies and others, as appropriate) on the British-Irish dimension on First World War commemoration. Such a working group could act as a source of advice for both governments and other administrations on this aspect of the commemorations, and bring forward suggestions for joint initiatives.**
- 52. The Committee commends, in particular, the educational initiatives included in the Prime Minister's proposals, including the schools' research projects culminating in visits to battlefield sites. The Committee calls on the Irish Government and Northern Ireland Executive, and the British Government as appropriate, to discuss possible initiatives which could mirror these proposals on**

an all-island basis, including through the use of cross-border exchange programmes.