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CORK AUDIT OF MEMORIALS PROJECT STATEMENT

As part of the Decade of Centenaries commemorative programme and Cork County Heritage Plan, Cork County Council, in partnership with Mac Conmara Heritage Consulting, is launching an exciting new project to comprehensively audit commemorative memorials across Cork. The project includes memorials relating to the Irish revolutionary period including the War of Independence and Civil War. On completion, it will provide Cork with a powerful resource to interpret how events of a century ago – sometimes contentious, sometimes unifying - have been remembered ever since.

Mission Statement

The Cork Audit of Memorials aims to deliver a comprehensive and data-rich listing of all known memorials in Cork associated with the 1912 to 1923 period, in order to enhance our understanding of the revolutionary period in Cork and beyond. Its central focus will be to document what has been memorialised across the public landscape of memory in Cork over the last century. The output will include wide-ranging database, as well as contextual, geographical, historical, and cultural descriptions of identified memorials.

Guiding Principles

The project will be guided by the principles set out by the State's Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Commemorations¹, noting that *on this island we have a common history but not a common memory of these shaping events*. The Cork Audit of Memorials sets out to be inclusive, while also recognising that we cannot ignore differences and divisions in our county. As the EAG states, *the goal of inclusiveness is best achieved, not by trying for an enforced common interest or universal participation, but by encouraging multiple and plural commemorations which remember the past while ensuring, as far as possible, that the commemoration does not re-ignite old tensions*.

¹ *Second Phase Mission Statement, 2017-2023*, Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations (Oct 2017), p. 2.

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Consultation and methodology

The audit's success will depend largely on the consultant team's capacity to identify, record and present information on memorials, while understanding and conveying the historic, cultural and mnemonic context of relevant sites. A crucial part of the Project methodology will be to invite Cork County Council Staff, members of the public, local history societies, churches and community groups to submit details on sites for consideration and inclusion within the audit. This information, together with liaison throughout the process, will greatly assist in capturing and integrating localised knowledge.

Cork County Council has contracted Mac Conmara Heritage Consulting (MCC), leading experts in the fields of heritage, commemoration and oral history, for this work. MCC, on behalf of the Council, have developed a project methodology based rigorous academic and archival standards. Ultimately, MCC will develop a master database which will include information about each memorial, including who and what it memorialises, who constructed it and why, detailed information about its condition and location and, in time, an interactive map to allow the people of Cork and beyond to engage with their history in an enjoyable and interactive way.

What memorials are included?

The project will document memorials commemorating the War of Independence and Civil War but also lesser-known sites to perhaps less dramatic, but socially relevant events, such as the vote for women in 1918. The project will therefore be reaching out to a wide variety of groups, including historical societies, the various Churches, community groups, political parties, An Garda Síochána, the Defence Forces and organisations such as the National Graves Association. Memorials in Cork associated with the 1912-1923 period may include but are not limited to the following categories:

- ✓ Dedication Memorials (to commemorate an event or episode)
- ✓ Historical Events (to commemorate significant events e.g. battles, ambushes, tragedies, landmark commemorations)
- ✓ Place/location-based (e.g. buildings, roads, streets, parks)
- ✓ Personal Memorials (erected in memory of individuals)
- ✓ Special or Sacred Places (within church & graveyards– i.e. grave markers)

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Funding

The County Cork Commemorations Work Programme 2021, of which this project is part, is being led by Cork County Council's Commemorations Committee, supported financially by both Cork County Council and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media, under the Decade of Centenaries 2012 -2023 Initiative.

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