

OPW-MO-00295-2022

26th September 2022

Dear Senator Fitzpatrick,

The National Centre for Research and Remembrance is proposed to occupy the former buildings and lands of the Monastery of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge and the attached Magdalene Laundry site, at Sean MacDermott Street, Dublin.

The National Centre will stand as a National Memorial to honour all those who were resident in Mother and Baby Homes, Industrial Schools, Reformatories, Magdalen Laundries and related institutions.

As a site of national conscience, the National Centre for Research and Remembrance will comprise:

- a) **a museum and exhibition space**, the development of which will be led by the National Museum of Ireland
- b) **a research centre and repository of records related to institutional trauma in the 20th century** which will form part of the National Archives, and
- c) **a place for reflection and remembrance**

Contributing to the social and economic development of Dublin's North East Inner City, the site will also encompass:

- d) **social housing and local community facilities**, and
- e) **an educational and early learning facility**, which will be led by the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (D/FHERIS).

While physically situated in Dublin, the National Centre will be accessible for all survivors, whether in other parts of Ireland or abroad. It will provide digital access to records and exhibits, as well as developing physical presences elsewhere to enable survivors to visit more easily. In this way, the Centre will be a national institution which achieves both a global reach and strong connections to, and benefits for, the local community.

One unique aspect of the central repository will be the inclusion of the personal testimonies of survivors; allowing the lived experiences of survivors to be formally accepted as part of the official record. Recognising the sensitivity of this work and the importance of respecting data protection and privacy rights, the processes for preserving and accessing records will be

progressed in conjunction with survivors and relevant experts, and will be supported by legal analysis and legislation.

The proposals for the National Centre were developed by the former Secretary General to the government, following informal consultation with key advocates and stakeholders, and were brought to Government jointly by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (D/CEDIY).

In approving the proposals, the government also approved the next steps which involve formal consultation with survivor representatives and local community representatives, and the establishment of a Steering Group chaired by the Ambassador to the UK, the former Secretary General to the government.

The next phase of work will involve the creation of comprehensive plans setting out detailed timeframes and cost estimates. The National Centre will be a major, multi-annual project, spanning a number of years.

A number of work streams are in development, spanning various technical aspects, as well as a process for engagement with survivors and with the local community in Dublin's northeast inner city. This will ensure that the development of the National Centre is directly informed by those most centrally involved, their families and representatives.

The Government will be the Approving Authority for the project.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth will be the (Lead) Sponsoring Agency, and will be responsible for carrying out the day to day functions of the Approving Authority.

The Steering Group has established a Site Development/Construction Subgroup which will be led by the State Architect/Principal Architect of the Office of Public Works. The OPW is responsible for the development of the Strategic Masterplan and will be the Contracting Authority for the Project.

A definitive timeline for the project is not yet available, however an indicative timeline of approximately five years have been provided by the steering group, subject to approval at key decision gates and available funding.

It is anticipated that initial repair, maintenance and structural work to protect the buildings from further decay and to facilitate future construction will commence on site before year end.

Yours Sincerely,

Patrick O'Donovan TD

Minister of State at the Office of Public Works and Flood Relief