

**Press Release, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017 – for immediate release**

**Sixth annual Flowers for Magdalenes events to take place on March 5<sup>th</sup>**

*JFMR calls for active memorialisation in the midst of further destruction of Magdalene history*

Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) is calling on members of the public to visit Magdalene graves this weekend and lay a flower to honour the women who lived and died behind convent walls. On Sunday, March 5<sup>th</sup> the sixth annual Flowers for Magdalenes events will take place around the country in all cities and towns where there were Magdalene Laundries. At least 1,663 former Magdalene women are buried in cemeteries in Ireland, many of whom are in unmarked graves.

This year's Flowers for Magdalenes events hold particular significance, as new property developments are planned on three former Magdalene Laundry sites at Donnybrook, Sean McDermott Street and Sunday's Well. In addition, during the first weeks of 2016, the former Magdalene Laundry in New Ross was demolished. Mr Justice John Quirke's sixth recommendation in *The Magdalen Commission Report* concerned the establishment of a Dedicated Unit which would (amongst other things) facilitate the 'acquisition, maintenance and administration of any garden, museum or other form of memorial'; this process, as envisaged by Judge Quirke, would include consultation with survivors. Although the government accepted Judge Quirke's recommendations in full, it has not implemented several aspects of the scheme, including the establishment of a Dedicated Unit as recommended.

No memorial should ever act as a means to draw a line under an issue – particularly one which remains contested – but we recognise that for some survivors, a gesture which honours their lives will mean a great deal. However, given the human rights abuses which were committed in the Magdalene Laundries, JFMR argues that in addition to any physical memorial(s), more 'active' methods of memorialisation are required so that we can learn from what happened in these institutions. In recent years, JFMR has been working to ensure that the history of the Magdalene institutions is properly recorded, in order to leave an 'active' legacy with which survivors, family members, friends, researchers and the Irish public can engage. We have gathered an archive of over 4,000 pages relating to the Magdalene Institutions and have assisted with the collection of oral histories with over 90 people (survivors, relatives and others associated with the laundries). All of these materials are being made freely available online.

Through the Magdalene Names Project, JFMR is endeavouring to collate a complete list of names of women who died within the Magdalene walls from a variety of archival sources, and we are working to commemorate the women with appropriate headstones. And, we have been involved for the past six years in co-organising the Flowers for Magdalenes events around Ireland. This year, events will be held in every city or town where there was a Magdalene Laundry, and further details are available here: <http://jfmresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Flowers-for-Magdalenes-Events-2017.pdf>

Flowers for Magdalenes is a family event and children are welcome.

Ends.

**Notes to Editors:**

- Details of Flowers for Magdalenes events: <http://jfmresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Flowers-for-Magdalenes-Events-2017.pdf>
- JFMR Submission to Dublin City Council on the proposed development at the former Magdalene Laundry at Donnybrook: <http://jfmresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/JFMR-Submission-to-DCC-Re-Donnybrook.pdf>

- Magdalene Commission Report: <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PB13000255>
- Judge Quirke's 6<sup>th</sup> recommendation:

*I am therefore recommending that the State should establish, fund, staff and accommodate a small Dedicated Unit which should be charged to provide the following services for eligible Magdalen women:*

- *A helpline accessible daily by the women to assist them to obtain the health, monetary and other benefits to which they will now be entitled*
- *Investigative and other help and assistance in obtaining such sheltered or other housing as they may be entitled to.*
- *Investigative and other help and assistance in obtaining such educational assistance as they may be entitled to.*
- *Practical and, if necessary professional, assistance to enable those women who wish to do so to meet with those members of the Religious Orders who have similar wishes to meet and interact.*
- *Similar practical assistance to meet and interact with other Magdalen women.*
- *The acquisition, maintenance and administration of any garden, museum or other form of memorial which the Scheme's administrator, after consultation with the advisory body or committee referred to below has decided to construct or establish.*

*The Unit should be established after the Scheme's administrator has first consulted with and received written submissions from an advisory body or committee representing the needs and interests of the Magdalen women. That body or committee, in turn, should be broadly representative of the majority of Magdalen women and should include representatives of eligible women currently living within the UK or elsewhere. A simple appeal process to a single agreed independent person should also be provided to resolve disagreement or dissatisfaction with preliminary decisions made by the Scheme's administrator in respect of the matters identified above.*