



Maeve O'Rourke

Magdalene issues

Maeve O'Rourke <maeveorourke@...> 8 February 2017 at 15:02
To: stephen.todd@..., Olive Sloan@..., Donnchadh.OLaoghaire@oireachtas.ie

Dear Donnchadh, Stephen and Olive,

Many thanks for your dedication to the ongoing problems with the DOJ's implementation of the Magdalene redress scheme. I'm writing to suggest an immediate focus on the issue of a memorial while the High Court case and Ombudsman investigation are proceeding.

As Stephen knows from this morning, the two JR cases have been adjourned again, until 21 and 22 February. The judge was put on a jury trial this morning, for some reason.

In the meantime, the Ombudsman will be proceeding with its investigation of possible maladministration of the Magdalene scheme. Its primary issue of concern is the DOJ's rejection of applications from women who worked in Magdalene Laundries as children while on the rolls of residential schools or 'training centres' on the grounds of the Magdalene Laundries. I have prepared a draft submission to the Ombudsman on behalf of JFMR, which highlights a number of additional problems with the Scheme's administration - and I will send you this submission as soon as it is finalised.

In light of the Minister for Justice's refusal to answer questions relating to the High Court cases or Ombudsman's investigation, I think it would be very useful to pick up the issue of a memorial under the Scheme over the next couple of weeks.

The Times reported this week that Dublin City Council put the Sean McDermott Street Magdalene Laundry up for sale in December, despite the government having made a promise that it would be explored for use as an artists' studio. (<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/kenny-broke-promise-on-dublin-arts-centre-h0xzscf2h?shareToken=bcebae924016980a175881f8c42f1bdd>) Sean McDermott Street is the only Magdalene Laundry building in possession of the State.

The Donnybrook Magdalene Laundry building is owned by a property developer, which is currently seeking its demolition (the planning permission application is being considered currently by DCC). Its contents are still inside (watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YETH7W0yCBg&t=165s>). JFMR has made a submission to DCC arguing that the women need to be consulted on the fate of the building and its contents, and if the building is not to be preserved, then at the very least its contents could find a home in the Sean McDermott Street Magdalene Laundry building - part of which could be turned into a museum / repository.

The Magdalene scheme, as recommended by Judge Quirke and accepted by the government in June 2013 'in full', included a 'Dedicated Unit', which has never been fully set up by the DOJ. Among other things, the 'Dedicated Unit' was supposed to establish a committee of Magdalene survivors to discuss a memorial and was supposed to procure such a memorial.

I would suggest that a concerted effort should now be made to prevent the sale of Sean McDermott Street by DCC, and to ensure that consultation with the women takes place on what should happen to (a) Donnybrook and its contents, and (b) Sean McDermott Street.

I am attaching JFMR's submission to DCC re Donnybrook. Please also see below the section from JFMR's draft letter to the Ombudsman re the 'Dedicated Unit' and memorial aspects of the Magdalene scheme.

I would be very happy to further discuss this and our broader submissions to the Ombudsman, and the High Court case, at any time.

All the best,
Maeve

Failure to establish important aspects of the recommended 'Dedicated Unit'

The following aspects of the 'Dedicated Unit' recommended by Mr Justice Quirke have not been implemented:

- (a) 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;
- (b) similar practical assistance to meet and interact with other Magdalene women;
- (c) the acquisition, maintenance and administration of any garden, museum or other form of memorial which the Scheme's administrator, after consultation with an advisory body or committee, has decided to construct or establish;
- (d) investigative and other help and assistance in obtaining such sheltered or other housing as they may be entitled to; and
- (e) investigative and other help and assistance in obtaining such educational assistance as they may be entitled to.[1]

Donnybrook Magdalene Laundry building planning permission application

While the Department of Justice is failing to implement the aspect of the Scheme concerning a memorial, the last Magdalene Laundry building in Ireland with its contents largely intact is currently subject to a planning permission application for demolition by a commercial property developer. Recent video footage of the interior of the Donnybrook Magdalene Laundry building[2] suggests that a large volume of paperwork remains inside, alongside artefacts from its time as a Magdalene Laundry before the Religious Sisters of Charity sold the building in 1992. JFMR has made detailed submissions to Dublin City Council, calling for consultation with Magdalene survivors regarding the fate of the building and its contents.[3] The Archaeological Assessment accompanying the planning permission application cautions that women's remains may be buried, unmarked, on the site. It further notes the heritage significance of the laundry site, including the building's internal features and machinery relevant to its past use.

Sean McDermott Street Magdalene Laundry building for sale by Dublin City Council

JFMR is deeply concerned that Dublin City Council has put the former Sean McDermott Street Magdalene Laundry building up for sale[4] while the Department of Justice is failing to establish a memorial in consultation with Magdalene survivors.

[1] Magdalen Commission Report, pp 11-12.

[2] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YETH7W0yCBg&t=165s>

[3] Justice for Magdalenes Research, Submission to Dublin City Council regarding the proposed property development at the former Magdalene Laundry at Donnybrook, Dublin 4, 4 October 2016

[4] Ellen Coyne, 'Kenny 'broke promise' on Dublin arts centre', *The Times* (6 February 2017), <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/kenny-broke-promise-on-dublin-arts-centre-h0xzscf2h?shareToken=bcebae924016980a175881f8c42f1bdd>



 **JFMR Submission to DCC Re Donnybrook.pdf**
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