



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development



Public  
Participation  
Networks  
Ireland

# Public Participation Networks

## Annual Report 2023





# SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR 2023

 **19,063** MEMBER GROUPS

 **15,242**  
**COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS**

**3,081**   
**SOCIAL INCLUSION GROUPS**

**730**   
**ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS**

2023 proved to be another year of challenges. On the heel of a global pandemic, increasing levels of conflict across the world and rates of inflation that hit the lowest income households the hardest, we increasingly experienced a break down in both our weather patterns and social cohesion in our communities. As always, the Community and Voluntary sector proved to be a vital part of the national response to these issues at a local level highlighting time after time, just how necessary and vital the Community and Voluntary sector is. Local knowledge was key.



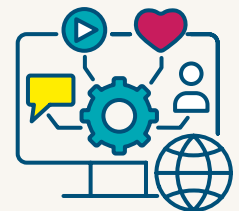
**926** **PPN REPRESENTATIVES**

sat on **343** Boards and Committees bringing the voice of the community to the decision-making table.

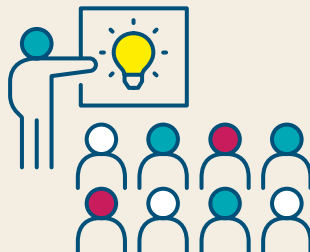
The PPNs provided a wide variety of training and supports for Representatives, allowing them to fully engage and participate.

There was continuous engagement with Member Groups, ensuring that vital information was widely disseminated.

2023 saw the PPNs increasing their Social Media profile. This is an increasingly vital communications tool, allowing different communities to be reached in different ways.



Wicklow hosted the 5th National Public Participation Network Conference in October, welcoming over 200 delegates representing community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental groups throughout the country as well as local authority officials, elected representatives and others who support the work of PPNs. The theme of this year's conference was *'Participation in Action'*. The Conference programme included presentations and workshops that showcased a wide and diverse selection of structures, processes, community work and policy development from across the PPN spectrum.<sup>1</sup>



The PPNs continued to adapt in response to the changes experienced by their communities and develop innovative solutions using a bottom-up approach to problem solving.

Consultations continue to be a vital part of the work of the PPN and took place across a wide variety of topics, with environmental issues becoming more and more prominent.

The PPNs continue to make a real difference to the communities they serve.

<sup>1</sup> <https://countywicklowppn.ie/national-conference-2023/>

# Contents

<b>Foreword by Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Minister Joe O'Brien</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Foreword by the Chairperson of the Public Participation Network (PPN) National Advisory Group</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Role of the National Advisory Group	6
Methodology	6
<b>Glossary of Terms</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Public Participation Networks – 2023</b>	<b>12</b>
Amplifying Community Voices	12
Reflecting Community Needs	14
Encouraging Community Inclusion	15
Enabling Community Climate Action	16
Acknowledging Community Challenges	16
<b>Section 1: Membership</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Section 2: Representation and Decision Making</b>	<b>19</b>
Vision for Community Wellbeing	20
Representation on Decision-making Bodies	23
Supports for PPN Representatives	24
- Linkage and Thematic Groups	24
- Municipal District Representatives	25
<b>Section 3: Training and Capacity Building</b>	<b>26</b>
Training provided to the PPNs	28
- Stakeholder Online Training for PPNs	28
<b>Section 4: Management, Administration and Finance</b>	<b>30</b>
Meetings	30
Structure of the PPNs	31
Interagency Collaboration	31
Social Inclusion	36

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<b>Section 5: Work with the Local Authority</b>	<b>42</b>
Local Authority Consultations	43
Specific Areas of Collaboration	44
Allocation of Community Seats	44
Grant Eligibility	45
Training and Induction by Local Authorities	46
<hr/>	
<b>Appendix 1: PPN Contact Details (October 2024)</b>	<b>47</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Appendix 2: Overview of PPN Activity in 2023</b>	<b>48</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Appendix 3: Impacts of the PPN in 2023</b>	<b>50</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Appendix 4: Examples of Successful Consultations in 2023</b>	<b>64</b>
<hr/>	



# Foreword

by Minister of State with responsibility for  
Community Development, Integration and  
Charities, Minister Joe O'Brien

**As Minister with responsibility for Community Development, Integration and Charities, it is my pleasure to introduce the PPN Annual Report for 2023.**

I am very proud of the achievements of the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) in 2023. In tandem with their many contributions to local policy decisions, the PPNs also grew at a near exponential rate. By year end, PPNs had grown to 19,063 member groups across the country representing the Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion sectors. The future for the PPN movement looks very bright indeed.

While there were many highlights in 2023, for my own part, I was very pleased to launch the PPN national awareness campaign. The campaign focused on communicating the benefits of PPN membership to community and voluntary groups. It also launched the new PPN brand identity and highlighted some of the many success stories of PPNs. Analysis of the campaign found that the audience reach for the period was over 2 million readers and over 12 million digital ad impressions.

Climate action remained a high priority for PPNs in 2023, in keeping with the role they play in helping to meet our national climate objective of transitioning to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by the end of 2050. Under the Climate Action Act, local authorities must consult with PPNs in the development of local Climate Action Plans. In this way, the volunteers that make up PPNs can feed their invaluable on-the-ground experiences and knowledge into local climate planning. Examples of the work PPNs have undertaken in this area are included in this Annual Report.

PPNs were set up to play a key part in local civic deliberation and community engagement in local government processes. To ensure that PPNs continue to thrive into the future, and building on the findings of the PPN Structural Review published in 2022, in 2023 a working group of PPN stakeholders continued to progress the development of a PPN Roadmap, aimed at refining and implementing the findings of the Structural Review. Given the growth and change that has occurred since PPNs were established, the Roadmap will be an important stepping stone to enabling PPNs to continue to flourish. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the working group for their dedication to the process and for all their work progressing this project.

In closing, I would like to convey my, and my Department's, commitment to continuing to support PPNs into the future. I would also like to take the opportunity to mark the contribution of everyone involved in the 31 PPNs across the country – the member groups, the volunteers, the Secretariats and the staff.

Thank you all for your sterling work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe O'Brien".

**Joe O'Brien**

Minister of State  
With responsibility for Community  
Development, Integration and Charities

# Foreword

by the Chairperson of the Public Participation Network (PPN) National Advisory Group, Ciara Bates

**In 2023 society continued to adapt to the post-Covid world. With restrictions now a thing of the past, exciting events, projects, consultations and training opportunities were again available to PPN member groups, and it is clear from this report that PPNs fully embraced the opportunities to engage with their members in-person again.**

I want to commend each of the 31 PPNs across the country for your hard work and dedication to reviving that community spirit once again. In delivering training, communication, engagement and information-sharing, you give community groups the tools to get involved and to influence policy in their areas.

A major project that took place in 2023 was the PPN national awareness campaign. This campaign was months in the making and came about when stakeholders recommended the need to increase the visibility of PPNs at a national level. A sub-group of the National Advisory Group kindly volunteered their time to work on the campaign, and I would like to thank them for their contribution and assistance on the project. This campaign was the first of its kind for a scheme in our Department. It was a multi-level communications campaign, and I know many PPNs took up the training and the expert advice provided by Alice PR, whom we contracted to deliver the project. The purpose of the campaign was to promote the PPN across Government Departments, Local Authorities and within communities. We were very proud of the levels of engagement which the campaign saw, as well as the coverage in both local and national media.

Subsequent to the publication of the Structural Review of Public Participation Networks in 2022, a collaborative process was put in place to work with the PPN community to develop an Implementation Roadmap to guide future actions to strengthen PPN structures. Steady progress was made on the development of the Roadmap in 2023, overseen and guided by the Roadmap Working Group. The Group is the main forum for developing and making recommendations to the Minister on future actions, using participatory and co-design processes to ensure that stakeholders are actively involved.

The aim of the Roadmap is to guide future development to enable PPNs to best fulfil the role set out for them in the 2014 Report on Citizen Engagement with Local Government, and to enable PPNs to function most effectively into the future. I wish to thank the working-group members for their diligent work and commitment to this project.

We travelled to Wicklow, the 'Garden of Ireland', for the PPN Conference in 2023. It was a wonderful event, which brought PPN Stakeholders together for those all-important networking, information-sharing and socialising opportunities. For those in attendance I think you will all agree Wicklow PPN did a wonderful job hosting and I want to thank them for organising such a memorable event.

On behalf of the National Advisory Group, I wish to thank the secretariats, member group volunteers and staff of every PPN up and down the county. Your work plays a vital role in enabling citizens' voices to be heard and your dedication to helping your communities is truly admirable.

I will finish by extending my sincere thanks to my fellow members of the National Advisory Group, past and present. Your knowledge, dedication and commitment to PPNs provides valuable insight and support to the Department. Your guidance is highly regarded by myself and the team and I thoroughly enjoyed working with you over the past 6 years.

The PPNs should be extremely proud of their achievements in 2023, your passion for your communities is inspiring.

Wishing you all continued growth and success for the future.



**Ciara Bates**  
Chairperson, National PPN Advisory Group



# Introduction

**Involving people in making the decisions that affect them and their lives is a core principle of democracy. Real participation goes beyond voting (representative democracy) to a situation where people and government work in partnership to co-create infrastructure and services, solve problems and work towards the wellbeing of all for this generation and the generations to come (deliberative democracy). By definition, such an approach requires a leaving aside of power differentials and making a specific effort to ensure that the voices and views of people who are not traditionally influential are heard and considered.**

It is becoming increasingly important to bring people together to share our commonality at a time when our differences are being weaponised. Discussion and deliberation allow us to share an understanding of the issues and even if full consensus cannot be reached, solutions can be found.

In 2014, the Local Government Act was amended to introduce Public Participation Networks (PPNs). The PPN recognises the contribution of volunteer-led organisations to local economic, social, and environmental capital. It facilitates input by these organisations into local government through a structure that ensures public participation and representation on decision-making committees within local government. These PPNs have been established in every local authority area in Ireland.

By the end of 2023, 19,063 community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental organisations were members of a PPN. Over 926 PPN Representatives were elected to 343 committees dealing with strategic policy, local community development, community policing and so on. 2023 proved to be yet another challenging year. The PPNs continued to provide invaluable and necessary supports all throughout, displaying resilience and adapting to meet a wide variety of community needs.

Local authorities and PPNs work together collaboratively to support communities and build the capacity of member organisations to engage meaningfully on issues that concern them. PPNs have a significant role in the development and education of their member groups, sharing information, promoting best practice, and facilitating networking.

By bringing local knowledge and expertise to decision making groups, they work to ensure that many different viewpoints are heard, ensuring more robust outcomes and ultimately better communities. Local authorities also have a vital role to play in facilitating participation through open consultative processes and active engagement.

“

Well-organized deliberation, however, engages ordinary citizens in an unbiased, comprehensive dialogue. This engagement is an antidote to cynicism and political resentment—and in today’s polarized world, it may provide an answer to populism and the accompanying growing distrust of elites, which has been especially poisonous in the body politic.”

*David M. Farrell, Jane Suiter, Re imagining Democracy. Pg 37.*

The report of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government, set up in September 2013, made recommendations on more extensive and diverse input by citizens into the decision-making processes at local government level. The Working Group Report was published in February 2014.

That report outlined the ways in which structures and processes for securing the engagement of organised civil society with local government could be strengthened. To do this, the Report recommended that a Public Participation Network (PPN) be established in each local authority area to enable the public to take an active formal role in relevant policy making and oversight committees of the local authority.

The Working Group Report recommended that the work of PPNs should be monitored and evaluated regularly in line with best practice.

## Role of the National Advisory Group

The National Advisory Group now includes one representative each from the Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion sectors, three PPN Volunteers – one each representing the three different sectors, three PPN resource workers and two Local Authority staff (one at Director of Service level and one directly supporting a PPN). The Group is chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development who also provide the secretariat services for the Group. Membership during 2023 of the Advisory Group is set out in Table 1.

Along with its monitoring role, the Advisory Group is also charged with advising and supporting the Department of Rural and Community Development to develop the PPNs. This Annual Report, which gives an overview of the work done by PPNs in 2023 was developed by a sub-group of the National PPN Advisory Group for completion by PPNs and Local Authorities.

## Methodology

In mid 2024, a consultation template was devised and agreed by the Annual Report sub-group circulated to all PPNs and Local Authorities via survey monkey for completion. The completed returns were collated for analysis purposes.

We can report that 30 PPNs completed returns. Where possible, comparable data from 2022 is included, however this data will not be directly comparable to that contained in the Annual Report for 2022 as that report concerned 29 PPNs. In relation to the membership figures, these represent all 31 PPNs as the figures are provided by Salesforce.



**Table 1: Membership of the National Advisory Group during 2023**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Chair	Ciara Bates	Department of Rural and Community Development
Community & Voluntary Sector Representative	Catherine Lane	National Women's Council of Ireland
Social Inclusion Sector Representative	Seán Healy	Social Justice Ireland
Social Inclusion Sector Representative	Louise Lennon	Irish Rural Link
Environmental Sector Representative	Charles Stanley Smith	Irish Environmental Network
Resource Worker Representative	Helen Howes	Wicklow PPN
Resource Worker Representative	Kieran Walsh	South Dublin PPN
Resource Worker Representative	Muriel Tobin	Waterford PPN
Resource Worker Representative	Sarah Wetherald	Sligo PPN
PPN Volunteer Representative – C&V Sector	Lynda O'Shea	Waterford PPN
PPN Volunteer Representative – C&V Sector	Vincent Lyons	Galway County PPN
PPN Volunteer Representative – Social Inclusion Sector	Gerry Kerr	Dublin City PPN
PPN Volunteer Representative – Social Inclusion Sector	Donal O'Shea	Laois PPN
PPN Volunteer Representative – Environment Sector	Cliona Kelliher	Kildare PPN
PPN Volunteer Representative – Environment Sector	Bill Morrell	Kerry PPN
CCMA Representative	John Quinlivan	Fingal County Council
CCMA Representative	Brendan Jennings Brian Beck	Cavan County Council Tipperary PPN

# Glossary of Terms

There are a broad range of definitions covering the nature and scope of public participation and local government. Some of these are explained below:

**Advisory Group** means The PPN National Advisory Group (see also **NAG**).

**Associate Members** are groups that do not fulfil the full criteria for membership of the PPN.

**CCMA:** The County and City Management Association is the 'representative voice' of the local government management network. CCMA members are chief executives of the county and city councils and the assistant chief executives of Dublin City Council.

**Comhairle na nÓg:** These are councils for the youth located in 31 locations in the Republic of Ireland, which gives the youth in Ireland the opportunity to be involved in the progress of local services and policies.

**Community** refers to a place (such as a neighbourhood or wider area), identity (such as belonging to an ethnic group), or interest (such as a commitment in common with others, for example, disability rights).

**Community Safety Partnership** is a government initiative which brings together the community and voluntary sector, the community, various other statutory services, and local councillors to work together in identifying and tackling community safety issues on a local level. Local Community Safety Partnerships are being piloted for 24 months in Dublin's North Inner City, Longford and Waterford.

The **Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage** oversees the operation and development of the local government system and provides the policy framework within which local authorities work and deliver services to the communities that they represent and serve. From July 2017, the policy framework regarding LCDCs, LECPs and PPNs transferred from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Article 28A of the Irish Constitution recognises the role of local government in providing a forum for the democratic representation of communities and in exercising and performing powers conferred by law.

The **Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD / the Department)** was established in July 2017 to promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland. In relation to the PPNs, the Department is the majority funder, provides the Chair of the National Advisory Group and has overall responsibility for the development and oversight of the PPNs.

**The Elected Council** is the policy making forum of the local authority; the municipal district members make decisions that affect their Municipal District area. Elected Councils (operating at local authority or municipal district level) exercise 'reserved functions' defined in law across a range of legislation. The day-to-day management of a local authority is carried out by the executive, i.e., the full-time officials led by the chief executive. The chief executive has a duty to advise and assist the Elected Council in the exercise of their functions.

**Handbook:** A composite set of Guidelines and advice issued in November 2020 to assist PPNs and other stakeholders, replacing the previous User Guide.

**HSE:** The Health Service Executive is the publicly funded healthcare system in the Republic of Ireland.

**JPC:** Joint Policing Committee: A Local Authority Committee comprised of councillors, T.D.s, Senators, the Gardaí and external stakeholders such as PPNs which makes policy proposals on policing issues. Section 36 of the Garda Síochána Act provided for the establishment of JPCs in each Local Authority administrative area and as part of the Local Government structures.

**LAG:** Local Action Group – these administer the Leader Programme at local level.

**LCDC:** Local Community Development Committee – a Local Authority Committee with public and private members which oversees community development programmes in an area including LEADER and SICAP. PPNs typically have 5 members on that committee. The aim of the LCDCs is to develop, coordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development.

**LEADER:** A funding programme delivered through the LAGS, which aims to support economic, social and environmental development of rural areas. LEADER is a programme that supports both private enterprise and community groups in delivering projects aimed at improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging the diversification of economic activity in rural areas.

**LECP:** Local Economic Community Plan - The purpose is to set out for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant Local Authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

**Linkage Group:** A group of PPN stakeholders in a particular issue who meet to make policy recommendations and work closely with a PPN Representative on a relevant board or committee.

**Local Authorities (LA):** City or County Councils. Play a key role in supporting economic development and enterprise at a local level. Local Government support on the ground is critical to the success of many initiatives which drive local communities. These include local festivals and events; design of streetscapes and village renewal schemes; support for micro-enterprises, business parks and incubation units; involvement in energy efficiency projects; promotion of rural broadband and planning for major investments in the green economy.

**Local Development Companies (LDC):** Organisations with a remit to support economic and social development in their catchment area. LDCs are typically contracted to deliver programmes such as the Rural Development Programme (LEADER), Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and Tús.

**Local Government Reform Act 2014** provides for a range of changes to the organisation and work of local authorities. Among other things, it provides for the amalgamation of a number of local authorities; the abolition of town councils; the abolition of city and county development boards; the establishment of local community development committees and it provides for a range of changes to the functions carried out by local authorities. Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 commenced on 1 June 2014 and provides the legislative basis which gives effect to the Framework for Public Participation and the Public Participation Networks (PPNs).

**MOU** means Memorandum of Understanding (agreement between Local Authority and PPN).

**Muintir na Tíre:** The National Association for the Promotion of Community Development in Ireland.

**Municipal District (MD):** A subdivision of a Local Authority area. Councillors meet at Municipal District level as well as in full council. MDs were established following the Local Government Reform Act in 2014.

**(n=XXX)** Denotes number e.g., number of replies, number who answered question.

**NAG** means the National PPN Advisory Group.

**Not for profit organisations** are organisations that work for the good of society, communities and/or specific interest. They do not make a profit and any income they do make that is above what they need to keep the organisation running is invested back into the organisation to improve it or to keep it going. No payments are made to any shareholders. It includes a vast range of organisations from very small groups with no income to large charities.

**PEACEPLUS** is a European Union funding Programme, designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

**Plenary:** All the member groups in a PPN. The Plenary is the ultimate decision-making body of the PPN.

**Pobal:** an organisation working on behalf of Government, and in conjunction with communities and local agencies, to support social inclusion and local and community development. They administer and manage government and EU funding aimed at supporting social inclusion and addressing social disadvantage in the country.

**PPN Budget** means the annual amount a PPN has available to it, derived from DRCD, the Local Authority and other sources.

**Salesforce:** a data and information management system that is common to all PPNs. The system itself allows PPNs to capture and manage information regarding member groups, store details on organisations and community and network groups, manage funding, manage campaigns such as email communications, generate custom reports and much more.

**Secretariat** means the administrative body of the PPN whose role is to put into practice the decisions of the Plenary; ensure that the PPN runs smoothly in between Plenaries; co-ordinate the activities of the PPN; communicate regularly with all PPN Member Groups and spread information about all PPN activities as widely as possible; and facilitate and enable the PPN Workers in their day-to-day activities to deliver PPN objectives.

**SICAP** (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme): is designed to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality. Each SICAP provider works with both individuals and community groups in a city / county or subdivision thereof, with a focus on people experiencing disadvantage and areas which are designated disadvantaged.

**Sláintecare** is a 10-year Government policy which aims to reform the health system and deliver universal health care.

**Social Inclusion:** activity centred on working to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment using community development approaches to build sustainable communities, where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected.

**SPC (Strategic Policy Committee):** local authority committees in city and county councils whose membership includes Elected Councillors, representatives of business, farming interests, environmental/conservation groups, trade unions and community and voluntary members. It is the task of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), as committees of the council, to advise and assist the council in the formulation, development and review of policy. They have no remit in relation to routine operational matters regarding the delivery of services. The SPC system is intended to give councillors and relevant sectoral interests an opportunity for full involvement in the policy making process from the early stages.

**Sustainable Development** is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Thematic Group:** A group of PPN stakeholders working on a cross-cutting policy theme, e.g., disability, social inclusion, sustainability.

**T.D.** - A Teachta Dála is a member of Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Oireachtas (the Irish Parliament).

**Tusla:** The Child and Family Agency, the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children.

**User Guide:** A composite set of Guidelines and advice issued in 2016 to assist PPNs and other stakeholders replaced by the Handbook in November 2020.

**Volunteer-led organisations** are those which are governed by a group of volunteers acting as a committee, board or other structure. They may also have paid staff who act on behalf of the board.

**Wellbeing** describes a community whose basic needs are met, where people have a sense of purpose and feel able to achieve important goals, to participate in society and to live the lives they value and have reason to value.

**Working Group** means the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government. This group was set up in September 2013. Its role was to make recommendations on more extensive and diverse input by citizens into the decision making at local government level. The Report of the Working Group was published on 28 February 2014 and its recommendations led to the establishment of the PPNs.

**Worker** means Resource Worker, Support Worker or other worker engaged by the PPN to carry out its duties.





# Public Participation Networks – 2023

2023 was yet another year in which global events impacted locally. Communities were still dealing with the effects of Covid 19, ongoing conflicts across the globe and the resulting impact of these on national and local budgets and service provision. The PPN is more important and relevant than ever as these shocks are impacting on the social cohesion of communities across Ireland. Ensuring that the voice of communities is brought to decision-making fora is a vital part of creating safe, secure places where citizens can engage, flourish and grow.

PPNs were asked to give examples of specific proposals or actions that their Representatives have brought to decision-making boards and committees and to outline the impacts that had. More detail on impacts reported by each PPN in their own words is included in Appendix 3.

## Amplifying Community Voices

Longford PPN had 10 Representatives on the Local Safety Partnership. An additional seat was requested to represent Travellers. This was agreed, bringing the total of PPN Representatives to 11.

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown PPN raised the issue that the diversity in the wider community was not necessarily reflected in the staffing of polling stations. Addressing this would be a way to ensure greater inclusion. The Social Inclusion officer stated that this was something that they were aware of and intended to follow up locally.

As Tipperary PPN is on the board of Comhairle na nÓg, information-sharing and raising of relevant issues have created more collaboration with young people and related agencies in all five municipal districts of Tipperary.

The PPN Representative met with the Education and Training Board (ETB) youth officers to link in with youth groups that may not be part of the PPN and so may not be availing of funding for youth organisations. This led to the PPN supporting the ETB in directing them to rural youth groups that needed support but were not on the ETB database. This liaison of the two organisations will strengthen groups working with youth and came from both being part of the Comhairle na nÓg steering group. Due to the links made by the PPN Representative, Tipperary PPN invited youth workers and their members to join in a series of countywide community conversations on climate challenges and active mapping of relevant community projects. This connection led to the youth voice being heard after world café-style discussions at the events.

Sligo PPN Representatives requested that the council ensure the planned routes to access the Eastern Garavogue Bridge would not result in heavy through-traffic, in particular heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) through this residential and amenity area which is also within the de-carbonisation zone outlined in Sligo's Local Climate Action Plan. The response from the Director of Services (DOS) was that the bridge is intended to facilitate local destination traffic and that heavy through traffic would continue to use the N4 as at present. Signage would direct larger traffic away from using the area and traffic calming measures would be implemented.

Cavan PPN Representatives have inputted positively and collaboratively to the Peace Plus Action Plan by designing, scoring and devising its development. The PPN considers the Peace Plus Committee to be an example of best practice in participative community empowerment on a local board and one to showcase. The entirety of the design is high on Arnsteins Ladder of empowerment<sup>2</sup> thanks to the Peace Officer overseeing the process and the assistance of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).<sup>3</sup>

Waterford PPN has a designated slot on all the agendas of the Transport and Infrastructure SPC. One of the points raised under this was a request for an update on the bus park and ride and orbital routes. The Director of Services (DOS) said that no park and ride sites have been identified and the orbital routes are a couple of years away but he will follow up with National Transport Authority (NTA) on expected dates. A second request was made about traffic safety and issues in relation to junctions. Waterford City and County Council (WCCC) senior engineer said that some valid points had been made by the PPN and that these junctions would be reviewed by the district engineer and that the junction at the Cork Road will be part of the redesign by active travel.

Carlow PPN discussed the possibility of community groups being trained in how to record place names, and that this will be an ongoing county wide project via the Heritage Office.

A Local Community Development Committee Representative in Roscommon PPN proposed changes to funding evaluation committee make-up which were adopted by the wider committee.

Clare PPN Representatives from the Local Community Development Committee and the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee were deeply involved in the formulation of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). Both committees are mandated to design, implement and oversee the LECP which will run from 2025 to 2029 and as members on the LECP steering group, Clare PPN Representatives had significant impact on its strategic goals and objectives and the implementation plan.

2 <https://www.citizenshandbook.org/arnsteinsladder.html>

3 The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) has the statutory remit for managing EU funding programmes within Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland helping to foster peace and prosperity across the region.

## Reflecting Community Needs

In Leitrim PPN, the Planning, Economic Development and Infrastructure SPC Representative brought a proposal to build a footpath between Kinlough-Bundoran to a council meeting. He pointed out the dangers of walking along the 3km road, with around 600 metres of the route being particularly hazardous because of a number of very dangerous bends.

At a Limerick Travel and Transportation SPC meeting, a Limerick PPN Representative delivered a presentation on their Universal Access Awareness project, outlining the day-to-day barriers encountered by people with disabilities, older people and people with buggies in communities in Limerick when drivers are not considerate in their parking. This Representative is a member of the Step Forward Disability group who had worked on this issue for some time. Councillors present acknowledged the issue and it was agreed that an awareness campaign should be delivered. This was developed into a Limerick City and County Council and An Garda Síochána jointly presented “Think Before You Park” campaign urging motorists to consider the broader implications of their parking choices. The aim of the campaign was to stop drivers from parking on footpaths, which causes major inconvenience and safety concerns for people with limited mobility and sight.

Cork City PPN Community Safety Linkage Group raised a proposal to research the need for a mobile drug unit in Cork and to engage universities to research on behalf of the PPN and HSE. The Environmental Linkage Group also made a proposal for the Local Authority to support community composting initiatives and to incentivise domestic low waste households.

Laois PPN Representatives raised health and safety and road safety concerns with Laois County Council and An Garda Síochána regarding the use of e-scooters at the JPC. Laois County Council supported the proposal. A letter was issued to the Ministers office requesting legislation regarding e-scooters. Laois PPN welcome the forthcoming Road Traffic (Electric Scooters) Regulations 2024. Users must be 16 years or older and obey a speed limit of 20km/h. E-scooters are banned from footpaths and users cannot carry passengers or goods.

A Louth PPN Social Inclusion Representative works in the youth services sector in the mid Louth area. This area has seen a marked increase in anti-social behaviour from youth members in recent years including racist graffiti, verbal and physical altercations and public drug and alcohol consumption. In a bid to tackle the racist graffiti issue, Louth PPN’s mid Louth Representative proposed a project to the mid Louth Joint Policing Committee, which included and consulted with youth members from the area. This project involved youth members being provided with paints and other resources to create their own artwork over the previously racist graffiti. Members from Ardee’s and Dunleer’s new communities were invited to contribute to these wall murals also, thus bridging the gap between youth members and those from new communities. JPC members from Louth County Council and An Garda Síochána along with representatives from the local business sector were keen to support this project. They provided the paints and other resources required to create the wall murals and also gave permission to the youth members to create the artwork on certain walls around both towns. To date, these works of art remain intact and have not been sprayed over with any further graffiti. In the run up to Halloween, the same mid Louth Representative requested a collaborative approach to tackling anti-social behaviour by youth members which had been evident in previous years (e.g. verbal and physical altercations, illegal bonfires and the dangerous use of illegal fireworks which had resulted in injuries sustained by children in previous years). An Garda Síochána undertook a number of safety talks across mid Louth in the run up to Halloween, including both primary and secondary schools and introduced themselves to youth members through attendance at youth clubs in the weeks running up to Halloween. Throughout the October mid-term break, An Garda Síochána increased their patrols, particularly on Halloween night. The beat patrols were accompanied by staff members from the different youth services in both towns. It was noted that incidents of anti-social behaviour were much reduced in 2023 compared with previous years and it was agreed that this collaborative approach by members of the JPC should be replicated in future years.



## Encouraging Community Inclusion

Following the Offaly PPN Secretariats' evaluation of the Social Inclusion event that took place in 2022, which had been planned as a one-off event, it was decided that the event while valuable, did not meet the needs of the people across the county who might like to learn about or access the services. The decision was taken by the PPN to call a meeting of agencies and support services to look at other ways of bringing the information closer to the Community. It was agreed that agencies and support services would open their doors during a one-week period in September to the general public. A range of events were organised from coffee mornings to show and tell events and other creative ways of encouraging the public to come and take a look and learn. This was very successful as it included events right across the county and allowed people to learn about services available in their own communities. Offaly PPN co-ordinated the Social Inclusion Awareness week and created a brochure detailing all the different events throughout the county. This was circulated via the PPN Newsletter, promoted on social media and also some hard copies were printed and placed in strategic locations around the county including libraries and post offices. Social Inclusion Awareness week is now an annual event.

Kilkenny PPN in conjunction with Vision Ireland made a presentation to the Transport Policy, Mobility Management and Water Services SPC round the expansion of the Abbey Quarter Braille Trail on a phased basis around Kilkenny City. The PPN Social Inclusion Representative on the SPC raised issues around the lighting around Kilkenny City and the Kilkenny City bus routes. Another issue raised by the Social Inclusion PPN related to the safety at crossings on the Kilkenny City ring road, where foliage is obstructing the view of road users. As a result, it can be dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the road to access houses, hotels and a large shopping area. Some of these issues raised have been acted upon by the County Council.

Dublin City PPN's Community and Voluntary Pillar Representative sits on the LCDC, as well as being involved with the LCDC's Health and Wellbeing sub-committee. The purpose of the group was to ensure "the various partners and people managing and delivering LCDC Health and Wellbeing programmes and interventions across the Dublin City Council area are regularly talking with each other to ensure familiarity with the scope of each other's work". The Representative was aware of work from the DRCD Healthy Ireland Fund, Slánteicare Healthy Communities Programme, World Health Organization (WHO) partnership for Healthy Cities, and the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme. This attendance on the sub-committee led to a series of conversations within the PPN about burnout of voluntary and community workers.

Wicklow PPN LCDC Representatives provided substantial input into the Local Economic and Community Plan and the LEADER Strategy and the actions chosen for implementation. Not all input was taken on board or made visible in the plans, but the input is on record and can be referred to. LCDC Representatives challenged the deadline for input into the Draft Local Economic Plan and the deadline for feedback was extended allowing further additions.

A Disability Linkage group was established in Kerry PPN. This brought together all the stakeholders who represent the disability sector and gave a space to discuss issues and concerns that they face in the community and how best to implement positive change. These issues and concerns are collated and brought before the SPCs and LCDC for discussion.

A Galway County PPN Secretariat member regularly collates data and informs the National PPN Secretariat network on updated figures and information related to PPN membership figures across the country, broken down per PPN. They also did a piece of work on the numbers of PPN Representatives across the SPCs across the country. These data sets help local PPNs including Galway County to feed into local policy, make a case for greater PPN representation and promote the positive impact of PPNs on local decision-making bodies.

## Enabling Community Climate Action

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At the Waterford Environment SPC, on the topic of 'The Life Emerald Air Pollution Monitoring Project' which is a collaboration between Waterford City and County Council and University College Cork, the PPN Representative spoke about historical data and asked if past data can be compared to new data to see if the new solid fuel regulations have made a difference since they took effect.

Through the work of Wicklow PPN on the Climate and Biodiversity Action SPC, the early appointment of a Biodiversity Officer to Wicklow County Council reflected the intensifying campaign among the PPN Representatives, activists, the public, committed public representatives and Council staff, all writing to prove they would welcome and have work ready for an early biodiversity officer appointee. The energy invested by Council staff in meeting the public to gather their input to the draft Climate Action Plan reflects both the imposed requirement for public consultation and also the growing interest they have met from the PPN members, staff and groups in promoting good environmental projects between PPN, Council and the public.

Laois PPN made a proposal regarding log cabins as a quick build and cost effective solution. The proposal has been supported by the elected members of Laois County Council. Laois County Council is preparing a policy on log cabins that will help support an affordable option for people trying to start out, all within the spirit of proper planning and sustainable development.

Due to the robust thematic network of Tipperary PPN Environmental groups, the Environment and Climate Action SPC Representatives have a strong mandate. This is achieved by meeting quarterly and underpinned by the Vision for Community Wellbeing document. The Use of Pesticide policy continues to rumble along but is definitely gathering ground, especially with the recent Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) having been fully adopted by the council. Hedgerows and the rights of nature (both of which overarch into other county council sections plans) have been successfully put on the agenda.

It is the PPN Representatives that note the minutes, not PPN staff, making it a capacity building and empowering exercise. The PPN Representative directed SPC discussions which were informative and received positively. Along with the 2024-2030 County Biodiversity Plan, the campaign on both issues will gather positive momentum

Following a presentation on the Sligo Bay Coastal Flooding and Erosion Risk Management (CFERM) Study, the Sligo PPN Representatives proposed that measures other than hard engineering solutions such as the deployment of rock armour be considered by Sligo County Council. The response was that all options would be discussed.

A Westmeath PPN Environmental Pillar Representative on the Planning and Transport SPC brought a motion to the relevant linkage group about the rights of nature. This was agreed by the linkage group, then the Plenary and brought forward to the SPC. That SPC referred the matter to the Environment Climate Action Water and Emergency SPC.

Kerry PPN Environmental Linkage Group made three informative presentations on tree policy, herbicide and pesticide policy and community allotments, with a view to have presentations made to full council. It is envisaged that the Kerry PPN will be a standing item on the Environment and Climate Action SPC.

## Acknowledging Community Challenges

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Notwithstanding all of the examples above, challenges remain. Despite the extensive training and support given to PPN Representatives with regard to the theoretical working of the SPCs and other decision-making bodies, some PPNs have found that their on-the-ground experience of influencing at these committees has not reflected their expectations.



# 1. Membership

Membership of a PPN offers many benefits. By joining a PPN an organisation will get:

- Access to relevant information on funding and grants coming through the Local Authority
- The opportunity to advertise their activities via the PPN newsletter, website, emails etc.
- Access to capacity building and training events which will support them in their work
- Access to information on decisions and proposals being made in their county / city and the ability to comment on and input to them, along with other PPN member organisations
- An opportunity to network with and learn from other organisations in the county / city who may be involved in similar types of projects
- The opportunity to become part of a Linkage Group for a Board or Committee of interest and be able to have their views heard and contribute to local policy
- The opportunity to nominate members to sit on a Board or Committee on behalf of PPN.

Each organisation must then choose to be part of one College which represents their primary interest – Community and Voluntary, Environment or Social Inclusion.

At the end of 2023, PPN membership totalled 19,063 member groups (**including Associate Members**) across 31 PPNs. These figures were gathered using the PPN Salesforce Database. Community and Voluntary organisations continue to account for the majority of members (80%), followed by Social Inclusion organisations (16%) and Environmental Organisations (3.8%). Table 2 below provides a breakdown of membership by type of organisation and shows the comparative changes in each area over 2023.

**Table 2: Composition of PPN membership 2022\* and 2023\***

College	2022* (n=31)	2023* (n=31)	Change in No.	% Total 2023
Community and Voluntary	14,386	15,242	+856	80%
Environmental	673	730	+57	3.8%
Social Inclusion	2,972	3,081	+109	16.2%
Total	18,053	19,063**	+1,010	

\*Includes Associate Members

\*\*Please note with regards to the 2023 total figure - there are 10 groups registered to a PPN unassigned to any college.

Seventeen of the 30 PPNs who made a return this year offered Associate Membership. This is generally for organisations which did not meet the full membership criteria, but who wished to be involved and receive information.

In total, PPNs had 549 Associate Members - 443 Community and Voluntary Associate Members, 28 Environmental Associate Members, and 78 Social Inclusion Associate Members (a slight increase from 529 the previous year).



## 2. Representation and Decision Making

The PPNs were asked to report on how they consulted with their member groups, from distributing information, to attending consultation events and making written submissions. Table 3 provides a summary of the actions taken by PPNs to support their membership to engage in a more deliberative democracy.

Table 3: Participation in Consultations, 2023

Method	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Distributed information to member groups about local consultations	27	3	0	0
Distributed information to member groups about national consultations	24	6	0	0
Attended consultation events representing the PPN	9	16	4	1
Resource Worker attended consultation events representing the PPN	9	17	2	2
Made written submissions to consultations as the PPN or as a subgroup (linkage group, etc.)	8	12	8	2
The PPN organised consultations with its membership (i.e., organise meetings and surveys)	9	15	5	1

As can be seen in Table 3 the majority of PPNs always provided their members with information about local and national consultations taking place. Resource Workers or PPNs Representatives attended consultation events on behalf of the PPN 'Always' or 'Sometimes' in the majority of cases, and again a majority reported that it either made written submissions or organised its own consultation events with its members 'Always' or 'Sometimes'.

PPNs gave examples of successful consultations in 2023 and shared models of best practice. These are contained in Appendix 4.

## Vision for Community Wellbeing

Supported by funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), 25 PPNs reported having a completed Vision for Community Wellbeing (VCW), up from 22 in 2022. Those without one report that staff turnover or shortages as well as budget constraints had been the reason why this work has been delayed and are actively working towards delivering in 2024.

### Examples of how the Vision influenced decision making

- Carlow PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing serves as a key guide for the work of PPN Representatives on Strategic Policy Committees and other decision-making bodies, as well as for the development of the strategic plan. The VCW is utilised by the PPN and its members as a valuable tool for making submissions. It helps to shape and prioritise our efforts as well as support our community representatives. It also provides essential data for our submissions, thereby influencing local and national strategies and policies. We also encourage other organisations and support agencies to incorporate the Vision into their work with Carlow communities. Additionally, the VCW is a central theme for our bi-annual Plenaries, where it serves to inform Carlow communities about the Vision and to advance the collective goal of community wellbeing across Carlow.
- Cavan PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing is used both to inform the writing of the strategic plan and induction of new Representatives so they may be guided by the spirit of this document in speaking on behalf of groups.
- Clare PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing was ratified by the plenary in January 2021 and remains a living document. It is frequently referenced in submissions and by Representatives in the various committees and forums. Clare PPN has carried out further collaborative consultations in the county which built on the VCW. This is used to inform policy submissions.
- Cork City PPN use it to empower the Representatives sitting on committees and member groups to support them when submitting consultations. It facilitates better connections with key stakeholders in the community who all contribute to decision making for Cork City. It can also showcase and highlight relevant community projects and contacts and funding for reference points.
- Cork County PPN have been rolling out Municipal District Plenaries in all 8 MD areas. A review of the MD Vision was authored by members. A hard copy was provided for all attendees and a brief presentation was made to illustrate the original inputs (This is available on the Cork County PPN website). The purposes and use of the Vision for Community Wellbeing was explained and the delivery and operation of the VCW was discussed.
- Donegal PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing was used in Local Town Plan workshops, Donegal LECP and Local Development Plan workshops.
- Dublin City PPN has a draft Vision for Community Wellbeing. In 2023, Dublin City PPN planned to return to the draft VCW and tasked a consultant facilitator with the job of reviewing and editing the document. It was the hope that the work undertaken for the LECP submission might lead to a fully reviewed and edited Vision, however, this work remains pending.

- Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown PPN held a workshop for Representatives at the end of 2022 detailing the significance of the data collected and how it could be used to represent our membership. Furthermore, the Vision for Community Wellbeing statement figured prominently in the consultation process for the DLR PPN strategic plan. DLR PPN recognised that the data gathered has a unique significance and enormous value and should be included in the new LECP.
- Galway City Community Network (GCCN) transposed the Vision for Community Wellbeing into a policies and positions document that is widely used as the basis for representation on all structures. The document outlines national policy and good practice in relation to each of the issues that GCCN represented, followed by the GCCN aim for the area in question and the positions agreed by GCCN. A reviewing process for this document was initiated in 2022 and was completed in 2023.
- Kerry PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing is the cornerstone of all recommendations and has also been submitted to the County Development Plan, LEADER and LECP. All new PPN Representatives and elected members of KCC receive a hard copy of the document as it is instrumental in informing all decisions.
- Kildare PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing was published in October 2023 and is a useful resource to help influence decision making. It was used to input into the Kildare County Council (KCC) Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029, the Newbridge Local Area Plan and the Kildare Local Economic Plan 2024 - 2029.
- Kilkenny PPN use the Vision for Community Wellbeing as a reference point for consultations at both local and national level.
- Longford PPN use the Vision for Community Wellbeing as the basis for developing the work plan. It also feeds into Longford County Councils plans, policies and strategies.
- Louth PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing has been issued directly to all departments within Louth County Council and to all of our PPN Representatives and members. This ensures that the information obtained from the community through our public consultations has been made available to members of all of the SPCs, boards and committees which are the decision and policy-making structures of the Local Authority.
- Mayo County Council, taking into consideration the work undertaken by Mayo PPN on the Vision for Community Wellbeing, consulted with PPN members on how the vision and values from the VCW can be considered. This is an opportunity for groups to have input into the formulation of Mayo County Council's Corporate Plan for 2024-2029, helping to align values and vision identified in the Wellbeing Statement. Data and information from the Vision for Community Wellbeing will be used to feed into the Local Economic and Community Plan.
- Meath PPN used the Vision for Community Wellbeing during consultations in the development of new Meath LECP plan and also County Climate Action Strategy.
- Monaghan PPN provide Representatives with training on the Vision for Community Wellbeing and it has been used in their representations on council committees in 2023.
- Offaly PPN used the Vision for Community Wellbeing to feed into the development of the LECP and LCDC.
- Roscommon PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing has been utilised to support the development of the new Local Economic and Community Plan (2023-2029) and referenced as an associated strategy within Goal 5, "A County where people's health and wellbeing are supported". Wellbeing data has also been used to support other local strategies and plans and referenced in Strategic Policy Committee meetings to support local decision making.

- Sligo PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing has been dissected and provided to all SPC Representatives to inform relevant discussions at SPC level. The outcomes have influenced the creation of a 5 paper housing series and the transport forum. A full presentation was made to a team in Sligo County Council and to the contractors for the LECP, however they did not follow up on inclusion of the content. We are not aware of the level of actual influence the papers have had.
- Tipperary PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing was adopted in 2023 and then used directly by the LECP Advisory Steering Group to develop community actions of the six-year action plan. It was also referred to in the Local Authority Climate Action Plan for the community-focused aspects of the plan. The VCW continues to be the first document given to any councillors as part of working more closely with the council. PPN Representative induction always involves clarifying strongly that to represent the PPN, the VCW is their mandate at the meetings they attend. The VCW is used as a foundation to all consultations and submissions.
- Waterford PPN use it as a mandate for Representatives on committees like SPCs, LCDC. It is also used by Waterford City and County Council on LECP and by Healthy Waterford and Sláintecare Healthy Communities.
- Westmeath's Vision for Community Wellbeing along with plenary consultations forms the basis for Westmeath PPN 5-year Strategic Plan 2021-2025, and subsequently its annual work plans. Copies of the VCW were distributed to every member group, elected councillor and PPN Representative. The VCW was submitted to the County Development Plan (CDP) consultation and key elements of the vision are being included in the wellbeing section of the CDP. The VCW will also be used by the new Local Economic Development Plan (LECP).
- Wexford PPN use the Vision for Community Wellbeing generally as a tool in the everyday running of PPN.
- Wicklow PPN use the Vision for Community Wellbeing as a mandate for PPN Representatives and as the first reference point and foundation for all PPN submissions. Wicklow PPN has shared non-confidential information from our VCW consultations to other local organisations that are developing their own strategies and plans. The information from the VCW also provide direction for the Wicklow PPN work plan and support the identification of priorities.



## Representation on Decision-making Bodies

One of the key areas in which PPNs can directly influence the decisions made at local government level is by representation on boards and committees, such as Strategic Policy Committees, Joint Policing Committees, County Boards and so on.

**Table 4: Participation of PPN Representatives on Boards and Committees, 2023**

	2023
No. of Representatives	926
Male	491
Female	434
Other/Prefer not to say	1
Proportion Male: Female: Other	53:47:0
Total No. of Boards and Committees	343

The overall number of Representatives reported increased slightly from 901 in 2022 to 926 in 2023, noting that the 2022 report referred to 29 PPNs while the 2023 report is made in respect of 30 PPNs. The number of boards and committees on which the Representatives sit decreased from 418 across 29 PPNs in 2022 to 343 across 30 PPNs in 2023.

The number of open seats available for PPN representation on boards and committees at the end of 2023 was 124.

Twenty-four of the 30 PPNs expressed that they experienced difficulties in recruiting Representatives in 2023. Some of the feedback suggests that there seems to be a lack of volunteers in organisations in general as employment levels are high, leaving those volunteer-led organisations with limited resources, making it difficult for members to commit additional time to PPN Representative activities. There were challenges in recruiting Representatives and that the process can take a lot of work and advertising.

Another barrier reported was that meetings of the policy and decision-making committees take place at a time that may not suit volunteers due to work and family commitments. The voluntary nature of the role may not be suitable if you have an inflexible work schedule or have caring responsibilities. As a result, this can limit the diversity in Representatives and vacancies can occur.

However, PPNs reported that the biggest factor is that it can be often difficult to see the impact or outcome of the time dedicated by Representatives, who often feel frustrated at the lack of progress. This can impact on the willingness of others to step forward. Some Representatives also report a lack of a partnership approach by the Local Authority at SPC level which prevents a collaborative approach to developing policy solutions.

Additionally, there may be a lack of awareness or understanding of the role. The PPNs reported the importance of setting expectations, “that the roles are representative rather than activist”. Lastly, there can be challenges filling seats from the Environmental Pillar. This is a cause of concern as there is such a small number of groups to fill vacancies from.

Tipperary PPN reported issues unique to them as the county still being divided into north and south, due to the county being aligned with the HSE Community Health Organisations (CHOs). There are five boards that request south county only PPN Representatives. There has been interest in some of the vacant seats from members from the north of the county that, unfortunately, due to their geographical setting cannot be nominated.

**Table 5: Supports for PPN Representatives 2023**

Type of Support	No. of PPNs (n=30)	No. of Groups (if applicable)
Linkage Groups	23	141
Thematic / Activity Groups	19	54
Representatives Charter	23	
Specific Training for PPN Representatives	23	
Training for Linkage Groups	7	
Meeting Feedback Forms completed by Representatives	24	
Local PPN Representatives Network	17	
One-to-One Support	23	
Local Authority / Committee Host	16	
National PPN Network	21	
Regional PPN Network	22	

## Supports for PPN Representatives

The role of PPN Representatives is acknowledged across the PPN network and their volunteerism and experience are greatly appreciated. A range of supports have been put in place across the PPNs for their Representatives, on which Table 5 provides greater detail.

Asked to comment on these supports, PPNs reported that networking was important as well as being 'useful for exploring the gaps in knowledge and understanding of the PPN'. The importance of training was a common theme and also a recognition of the time and resource constraints for both the PPN workers and volunteers. Training and induction can be challenging to manage.

Additional resourcing may be required to support facilitation of linkage groups. There were calls for the Local Authorities to take responsibility to provide training to Representatives on how SPCs work.

Wicklow PPN developed an induction email template which is used to welcome and provide relevant information to new member groups, new PPN Representatives and new Secretariat members. This resource has since been shared with other PPNs.

Clare PPN report holding pre-meetings with Representatives before each committee or forum where the agenda and any issues coming from member groups or plenary meetings is discussed. Extra supports are needed for Representatives that have additional needs.

The PPN National Conference was recognised as a place where Representatives from different PPNs can chat informally and much learning and knowledge sharing takes place.

## Linkage and Thematic Groups

Where linkage or Thematic Groups exist, these can either take the form of overarching areas (for example, Social Inclusion, Housing and Infrastructure, Environmental, Health and Wellbeing, Community and Voluntary, Rural Development, Planning and Strategic Development, Economic Development, Community Safety/Crime and so on) or more specific areas of interest (for example linked to specific committees or related to Youth, Older People, Climate Change and Biodiversity, Disability Networks, Culture and the Arts, Sports, Water, Tourism, Diversity, Transport and so on).

Some of the PPNs reported that using college and municipal district membership as linkage groups works well, especially when combined with all-college pre-meetings for Representatives before each meeting of their committees. This helped to ensure Representatives from different colleges are aware of each other's concerns, their objectives for the meeting and build a shared understanding. PPNs reported that this model built a real sense of the communities' and college's needs and concerns which were then used to influence policy wherever its appropriate, not just on one committee.

Some of the PPNs found maintaining the requirement that a linkage group must meet 3 times annually in order to be deemed active brings about an additional time commitment for the Representatives and members. What has proved useful is open conversations during the Plenary meeting between Representatives, Secretariat and Members. Providing informal opportunities for membership and Representatives to engage is proving very fruitful.

The PPNs are investing a significant amount of time into the development of linkage groups and as a result report needing more resources and funding to possibly outsource their setting up. Official linkage groups create an extra layer of administration and staff time so thematic groups are the model preferred by some PPN Secretariats.

There was recognition given to the fact that governance is very centralised in Ireland. Despite great discussions about different policies at a linkage group meeting, the Local Authority may not have the powers to change policies that have been devised at a national level.

## Municipal District Representatives

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PPNs ensured that all Municipal Districts or geographical areas were engaged with in 2023 by:

- Ensuring that 'Community Roadshows' or 'PPN on Tour' events took place in a wide variety of locations.
- Actively reached out to all member groups across the region.
- Holding plenaries and secretariat meetings in different areas of the county.
- Facilitating a wide variety of networking and inter-agency events.
- Combining in-person, hybrid and online meetings to reach as many members as possible.
- Providing information sessions on a wide variety of topics across the MDs.
- Engaging digitally with member groups via newsletters and social media.
- Working with member groups to provide solutions to issues of accessibility.



### 3. Training and Capacity Building

PPNs provide invaluable free and low-cost training to their membership, Secretariats and Representatives to support them to fully engage within their communities. This training can be technical in nature (for example, how to write funding applications; governance; data protection: adapting to an online environment) or more soft skills based (for example, self-advocacy workshops; community development; thematic showcases). The organisation and provision of this training and capacity building function is time and resource intensive. However, it is an important part of the work of the PPNs to support their community groups to participate in local decision-making.

In 2023, the PPNs provided a wide array of training, capacity-building programmes, and information and awareness campaigns. Following on from training needs analyses (TNA) across the network, indeed with some combining TNAs across regions, the following are some examples of the types of training provided by PPNs in 2023.

Louth PPN's awareness campaign promoting equality for women in County Louth coupled with workshops on the political system (both national and local) had a positive tangible impact. The awareness campaign comprised of a series of focus group sessions to investigate and understand the equality issues women faced in the past and also in the present.

The interactions, learnings and collective female community voice for the future were gathered and outlined in the report entitled "Driving Equality for Women in Louth", which was launched in November. Coming together and realising the same issues around inequality are shared across age, ethnicity, ability and life experiences highlighted that women can and must advocate and promote equality for one another and for themselves. The workshops focused on both the national and local political system and where Louth PPN fits into this structure which proved beneficial to both the women who attended and to Louth PPN.

Some of the women were unaware of their voting rights (particularly those from new communities) and many were unaware of the potential impact their individual vote may have in addressing change. The report focused the attention of women on issues of particular interest to them. It is hoped that this will help them to identify future candidates who are most aligned with their individual priorities. Many of the women who attended were unaware of the opportunity through Louth PPN of contributing to local policy and decision-making boards and committees. It is hoped that Louth PPN will benefit from these workshops through the nomination of some of these women to vacant positions.

Following the upswing in right-wing action against refugees and migrants, Clare PPN organised two information sessions for community groups and activists to dispel the myths being propagated online. Following a factual presentation, from the Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland (MASI), they took questions. These were well-attended events which were popular, and which reassured the people who attended that they had the knowledge to discuss the issues in their communities. Hope and Courage Collective and Trademark Belfast delivered sessions that also had an impact with member groups as the climate of the divisive far right politics was seeping into some communities around the country.

In 2023, Mayo County Council introduced an 'online applications only system' for the Community Benefit Fund. Mayo PPN cited this new facility may cause some difficulty for community groups. The PPN hosted two online workshops (morning and evening) to guide groups through the process of submitting an online application. The training workshop was a step-by-step guide on how to navigate through the Councils online portal, including registering details and using authenticator codes to access the funding application form. The second part of the workshop included a detailed outline on how to complete the funding application form successfully. The PPN compiled a short video of the process which was distributed to community groups in Mayo and on the PPN website.

Over 300 community groups attended the workshops, and the feedback was extremely positive. As one participant quoted "I had my laptop in front of me completing the application form and my PC with the video running, and it was a dream, well done to Mayo PPN for their assistance".

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown PPN wish to showcase the Bealtaine<sup>4</sup> Training Workshops as it demonstrates that participation by the public in surveys and training during Covid made the PPN aware of the needs of older members of the community for support around using technology. Specifically, that they need training that would be meaningful to them on technology that they meet in their everyday lives rather than the technology of the workplace. Collaboration within the community and a willingness of county organisations to work together to address the needs of their community had a lasting impact. As a result of these taster classes, the Adult Education Service South East used the initial ideas and evidence of the training needs of the older members (provided by DLR PPN) of the DLR community as a pilot programme. They have since gone on to develop a series of short courses aimed at assisting to address the needs of the older members of the community with digital literacy. This programme demonstrates the flexibility and adaptability of the PPN and the resourcefulness of its staff and Secretariat to respond and their awareness of their community.

Kildare PPN held a 'Working Together for Public Participation Stakeholder Breakfast'. The event focused on building capacity and relationship-building between all stakeholders in Kildare PPN and Kildare County Council. The event focused on recapping our first 'working together for public participation' training which took place the previous November, highlighting the role, remit and statutory basis of the PPN, along with the committee processes and structure within Kildare County Council. The Director of Services for Climate, Community, Environment and Water delivered a presentation on the policy journey from the pre-development stage right through to the implementation.

4 <https://bealtaine.ie/>

This event was very well received. It worked on closing gaps between all stakeholders, sharing information and strengthening the role of the PPN Representatives on all SPCs and committees.

PPNs report in general that ‘all the member training organised by the PPN had a positive impact for PPN member groups, increasing their knowledge, skills and awareness on the many important topics covered’.

### Examples of Training and Capacity Building programmes provided by PPNs in 2023

- Zoom/Canva/Digital Tools Training
- Community Leadership and Effective Representation
- Storytelling and Media Training
- GDPR
- Induction
- Local Authority Structures
- Stress Management
- Time management
- Grant Information and Making Applications
- Taking Environmental Action
- Working Together for Public Participation
- Community Leadership Skills
- Marketing for Non-Profits
- Boards and Responsibilities Training
- Social Media
- Charities Governance Code
- Sustainable Development Goals and Circular Economy Workshops
- Law reform commission
- UNCRPD
- Graphic Design and Website Building skills
- Public Sector Duty
- Facilitation Skills
- Summer Schools with the Centre for Engaged Research (CER) from Dublin City University (DCU)
- Role of Representatives
- Diversity, inclusion, inter-cultural and anti-racism awareness
- Strategic and project planning
- Networking
- Understanding and Influencing Local Policy Structures
- Online Safety
- Community Sector Insurance Needs
- Social Enterprises
- Building Sustainable Communities
- Climate and Biodiversity Action
- Basic Bookkeeping
- Women’s Safety

## Training provided to the PPNs

### Stakeholder Online Training for PPNs

DRCD in conjunction with Social Justice Ireland continued to provide online training to the PPNs in 2023. The PPN Stakeholder training was delivered online via pre-recorded sessions. The modules comprise of 8 sessions, some of which are divided into two videos to ensure engagement. Each module also has a feedback form, quizzes which allow for participants to gauge their own learning and additional materials relevant to the topic for download. Of the 84 registrations received in 2023, the largest stakeholder group are PPN Representatives with 24 participants. This is followed by Local Authority Staff with 23, Secretariat with 21 and PPN staff at 13. Three DRCD staff registered in 2023. No councillors registered in 2023.

In 2023, DRCD commissioned and funded an additional support service for PPNs to be provided by The Wheel in conjunction with Adare HRM. The service gave PPNs access to specialised professional advice on HR, governance and conflict resolution queries. A mediation service was also offered as part of the service, as well as online training on the following:

- Leading communities, the role of the board or committee member
- Strategic planning
- Procurement
- Grant writing
- Facilitation skills
- Managing finances
- Governance and understanding the Charities Governance Code
- Managing risk.

In the springtime of 2023 the PPN National Awareness Campaign, funded and commissioned by DRCD in collaboration with PPN stakeholders, was launched by Minister Joe O'Brien T.D. As part of this campaign, a media training programme was provided to PPNs by Alice PR, who provided expert advice and training in the field of public relations and on topics including:

- Social media
- Media relations
- Digital communication strategy
- Media spokesperson training, and
- Plain English training.

## Salesforce training

DRCD also continued to fund the provision of support to PPNs on the use of Salesforce, commissioning South Dublin Volunteer Centre (SDVC) to continue to train online for new and advanced users. In 2023, SDVC provided the following support:

# 228

**INDIVIDUAL  
CASES DEALT  
WITH 226  
HOURS OF  
SUPPORT  
GIVEN TO  
THESE CASES**

# 33

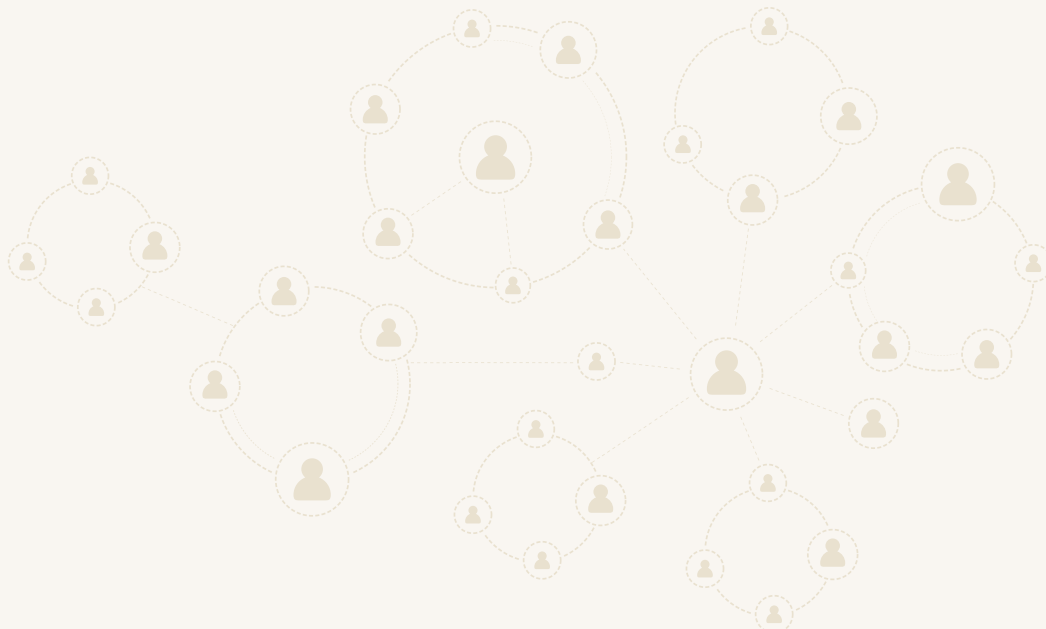
**TRAINING  
SESSIONS  
IN TOTAL**

# 58

**STAFF  
ATTENDED  
ONE OR  
MORE  
TRAINING  
SESSIONS**

# 131

**HOURS OF  
TRAINING WAS  
DELIVERED  
OF WHICH 95  
HOURS WAS  
TRAINING OF  
NEW USERS**





## 4. Management, Administration and Finance

### Meetings

A total of 60 Plenary and 285 Secretariat meetings were held in 2023 by 30 PPNs.

The PPNs report that:

- Meetings are very important to ensure good working relationship, collaboration, and progress of PPN work plan. These meetings improve the workings of the PPN and the support provided to members. However, meetings take up a lot of time and energy which can be challenging with limited staff resources.
- Most meetings are held monthly to best ensure the effective and efficient running of the PPN within the county, with numerous other meetings taking place on a weekly basis.
- Meetings were used to make presentations on topics such as new LEADER funding, PeacePlus funding, Building Acquisition Measures 2023, CLÁR 2023, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, information on the Community Climate Action Fund, strategic plans, reviews of Service Level Agreements, Memoranda of Association as well as reviewing the Constitution.
- Some PPNs report that many of the meetings held in 2023 related to staff recruitment.
- Meetings work well when they are structured with standing orders of agreeing minutes, updates from the Resource Worker/Co-ordinator, updates from Secretariat and any other business.



- The use of both formal and informal sub-groups is reported to work well, making the best use of volunteer's time.
- The nature of meetings has changed due to the pandemic and PPNs are working with mixtures of online only, hybrid and in-person only meetings.
- Meetings held in collaboration with the Local Authority were found to be beneficial in that any outstanding issues, concerns or differences were dealt with through dialogue and open communication.

## Structure of the PPNs

PPNs may be established and operate under a number of legal and administrative structures. Of the 30 PPN respondents, 19 were hosted by the Local Authority; seven were hosted by another Community Organisation and four operated as independent companies.

## Interagency Collaboration

Twenty-seven PPNs reported engaging in some interagency collaboration in 2023. The 30 respondent PPNs all reported consultations and inputs into national surveys and consultations. It was noted that collaboration with other organisations/agencies adds huge value to PPN activities.

Below are gathered some examples:

Louth PPN collaborated with Healthy Louth for the provision of committee skills training to youth members. One of the key target groups for Healthy Louth's work plan is the youth sector. During focus groups with youth members hosted by Healthy Louth in early 2023, it was pointed out that the voices of youth members themselves are rarely present when decisions or policies are being made on their behalf. The committee skills training provided as part of this project equipped the youth members who participated with the skills necessary to sit on a board or committee, thereby supporting them to represent themselves when decisions regarding them and their peers are being made.

It is anticipated that the provision of this training to current youth members will have the added benefit of helping to build future capacity of community groups to have their voices heard at decision and policy making structures in the County for years to come.

Dublin City PPN was involved in two Dublin City initiatives, Inclusion and Integration Week and Dublin City Learning Festival. This collaboration is ongoing and organically improving, as PPN member groups are encouraged to attend and be involved in the initiatives. Ideally, the PPN will be more involved in the planning of these projects and programmes in the future.

Sligo PPN hosted the Sligo Community Expo, showcasing community groups and organisations in the county and how to engage with them. The partners in the project were An Garda Síochána, Healthy Ireland, Muintir na Tíre, Sligo Leader Partnership and Age Friendly Sligo. Sligo PPN partnered with Street Feast to host a series of events across Sligo. Sligo PPN also developed a Healthy Eating Street Feast guide and an Environmentally Friendly Street Feast check-list – both of which were distributed nationally.

Donegal PPN are an active member of the Donegal County Council (DCC) Disability Strategy Working Group and involved in the formatting of DCC's first Disability Strategy. The PPN have been involved with further town and beach walkability audits with the DCC Access Officer. PPN members were organised to take part in the first Women in Politics event and 33 members conducted the first female meeting in the Council's Chamber. Donegal PPN attended and have had stands at Health Service Executive (HSE), Older Persons, Youth Council, Volunteer, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA), Education and Training Board (ETB), Alcohol Forum and Traveller events throughout the county in 2023.

Wicklow PPN hosted the PPN National Conference 2023 in collaboration with Wicklow County Council. The theme of the Conference was 'Participation in Action' and our aim was to showcase community participation and engagement projects that have had beneficial impacts across the country. 200 delegates from all counties represented PPN Secretariats and Representatives, local authorities, local and national government in the Arklow Bay Hotel. Presentations were provided on the National PPN Roadmap, and the Westmeath Protocol. A social inclusion focused excursion took delegates to Beyond the Trees Avondale, while a community and voluntary focused excursion brought delegates to Aughrim Sports and Leisure Centre to meet many of the voluntary groups working in Aughrim. Environmental interest groups took a walk around Arklow to learn about coastal erosion, the wastewater treatment plant and the harbour to headways project. Heritage interest groups had a guided tour of the Arklow maritime museum, the Abbey Lane excavation site and mural and the Arklow castle, as well as finding out about Arklow's pyramid and pottery heritage. A community expo provided delegates with the opportunity to meet some of Wicklow PPN's member groups from across the county. Workshop topics included: Clare Anti-Poverty Strategy, Waterford Community Safety Partnership, Tipperary Community Climate Coaches, How we Network and communications.

Kilkenny PPN continued to assist the Kilkenny Access Group, the advocacy group for people living with a disability in Kilkenny, in identifying key objectives for the group in respect of their advocacy work and the PPN also assisted in the initiation of a Disability Access strategy for Kilkenny Local Authority and supported the Kilkenny Access Group to make submissions to this strategy. The PPN is a member of the Community Response Forum for Ukraine. This is made up of key stakeholders around the county who work in unison to assist members of the Ukrainian community transition to life here in Kilkenny. Kilkenny PPN is also a member of the Age Friendly Alliance to support and assist the Local Authority with other key stakeholders to improve the services for and wellbeing of older people in Kilkenny.

Galway City Community Network (GCCN) supports the active participation of its Representatives on the LCDC. GCCN is active on the LCDC Social Inclusion Subgroup and the LECP Advisory Group. GCCN in collaboration with Galway Traveller Movement, Communities of Sanctuary and University of Galway have hosted the Galway Communities Against Racism and Discrimination Dialogue Workshop to mark the International Day Against Racism. GCCN implements a collaborative approach to policy work. All submissions are preceded with an information event, often in collaboration with other organisations such as Galway City Partnership, AMACH LGBTI+, Access for All, Galway Traveller Movement, Galway City Council etc. and the draft is shared for comment and amendment by the partners before submission. GCCN continues to collaborate with other PPN colleagues including the sharing of resources where appropriate.

Tipperary PPN is committed to working in partnership with all the relevant agencies and groups around the county and sees the value of forming strategic alliances. Through our Representatives and other pieces of collaboration, we contribute to the work of the Tipperary County Council (LECP 2024-2029, Local Authority Climate Action Plans (LACAP) 2023-2028, Local Authority Migrant Integration Strategy launch, LCDC, six SPCs, Healthy Tipperary steering group, County Community Integration Forum, monthly PPN Tipp Together inputs, Local Authority Art newsletter, ETB (Wellbeing Advisory Group, Tipperary ETB Regional Adult Literacy Coalition and newsletter inputs), Tusla, Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC), Drug and Alcohol Task Forces (identifying potential county projects for regional replication via PPN Representative on SERDATF), Comhairle na nÓg (via Steering Group), Tipperary Volunteer Centre (PPN Co-ordinator is TVC Treasurer and PPN Representatives for both north and south Tipperary), South Tipperary Development Company (newsletter inputs, stands at both 2023 Plenaries) and the Tipperary Transport Co-ordination Unit.

Mayo PPN supported and attended the Older Peoples' Council open day. Mayo PPN attended the Community Come Back Open Day. Mayo PPN sits on the following committees: Comhairle na nÓg, LCDC Education, Training and Skills Working Group, Connect Café, Ballina European Capital Committee, Community and Integration Group, Communications Working Group and Men's Health Working Group.

Offaly PPN presented on funding opportunities at each LCDC meeting, assisted with Age Friendly Consultation process, met with members of Comhairle na nÓg and also facilitated a table at the AGM and attended meetings and promoted Healthy Ireland initiatives via social media and PPN newsletters.

Leitrim County Council and Healthy Ireland in conjunction with An Garda Síochána Community Engagement and Crime Prevention Units, Leitrim PPN, Muintir na Tíre and the Leitrim Development Company hosted two Community Information Events in March and Oct in the north and south of County Leitrim. The overall aim of the event is to connect people to their community. Leitrim County Council Cathaoirleach said it is a "great example of the collaborative work". These events provided invaluable information, networking, advice, free health screening, talks by An Garda Síochána, Animal Welfare, HSE, Muintir na Tíre and Love Where You Live Awards. Leitrim PPN are based in Leitrim Development Company and work collaboratively on many events to include the Re-Energizing Communities event where Leitrim PPN gave a presentation.



Westmeath PPN had active engagement with An Garda Síochána and Comhairle na nÓg in the planning and delivery of the Annual Comhairle na nÓg Road Safety Day which took place in Athlone Regional Sports Grounds. Approximately 1,000 second level students attended. Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg has won a Leading Light award for this event. Students were able to see the outcome of a mock car crash and hear from people who lost loved ones in road traffic accidents. One of the highlights was when the Rescue Helicopter landed. The event educated students about road safety and will hopefully have a lifelong impact on their driving habits. One of our Representatives, who was on the Joint Policing Committees (JPC), was also on the Midlands Drug and Regional Task Force (MRDATF) and has made many contributions in general. They are also as a member of MRDATF's sub-committee on Drug Related Intimidation and Violence Engagement. Westmeath PPN had a stand in the Well Westmeath Expo run by Healthy Westmeath. The purpose of the event is to promote health and wellbeing through being active and staying connected. The event was all about health, wellbeing and activities and included an Information Village, music, dance, guided tours, nature walk, fun exercises and 'Have a Go at Physical Activities'. Over 2,000 visitors attended the event, which was free entry to both the event and Belvedere Gardens and Park on the day.

Laois PPN in collaboration with Laois County Council hosted the Laois Community and Voluntary Awards 2023. All the nominees are PPN Member Groups. The Awards recognise and celebrate the community groups and volunteers in Laois who enhance the quality of lives in our local community. Laois PPN launched our property marker which is a crime prevention initiative and will roll this out in collaboration with An Garda Síochána. Laois PPN is a member of the Age Friendly Alliance. Laois PPN is identified as a key stakeholder in the implementation of the Age Friendly Strategy. Laois PPN is a member of the steering group of Comhairle na nÓg, HSE and Mental Health Ireland collaboration regarding mental health and suicide prevention. Laois PPN collaborated with the Healthy Ireland Co-Ordinator on the filming of Operation Transformation with community groups in Laois.

Limerick PPN partnered with University of Limerick (UL) ENGAGE, Comhairle na nÓg and Limerick Community Education Network (LCEN) in delivering the UL Citizen's Assembly. This all day event saw 12 UL Academics presenting their projects, each required to have a definable community engagement aspect and benefit, as well as a link to the SDGs to the 100 attendees. Four projects were awarded €10,000 funding to deliver the project following a vote by attendees.

Roscommon PPN engaged with the LCDC on numerous community initiatives including the "Planning Roscommon Together" dual public consultations and supporting the drawdown of various funding supports for groups across the county. This included supporting the development of the new Local Economic and Community Plan (2023-2029). The PPN also supported several inter-agency collaborations including bike week, social inclusion week and various integration initiatives. In addition, the PPN also supported the delivery of the local harvest festival in Castlerea, Co. Roscommon with the Age-Friendly Programme team, Healthy Ireland Connect Cafes and community safety awareness campaigns with An Garda Síochána. Roscommon PPN also collaborated with Roscommon LEADER Partnership and Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board to deliver a bespoke community training programme based on a needs analysis with groups. The partnership approach avoided duplication of offerings, thus enabling synergies with key local development stakeholders.

Cavan PPN collaborated with Cavan Volunteer Centre (CVC) and Cavan Disability Network (CDN) to bring groups and individuals together to celebrate their input as volunteers, and to highlight the work done, and the work still required, in terms of creating a more inclusive society in Co. Cavan. There were roadshows in each MD. Meeting the groups in their own communities contributes to their validation, as well as improving connections between the PPN and the member groups. Training courses are vital, particularly the Representatives training, which facilitates capacity building such as enabling Representatives to have a better understanding of the committees on which they serve and therefore be more effective.

Peer learning is also a result of this training. Lastly, ENews facilitates the consistent and dependable dissemination of information relevant to community groups in the county. Cavan PPN has a terrific track record of communicating with our member groups in the last few years.

The 55+Network is a collaboration between Age Friendly and Kerry PPN. Consultations took place that identified the need for an Older Person's Council as a linkage Group to Kerry PPN and to consider establishing Kerry Over 55s' Network Development.

Galway County PPN collaborated with Age Friendly, Galway City Council, HSE, and various other stakeholders to promote and encourage input into the newly drafted 'Galway Directory of Services for Older People'. The PPN have been involved in distributing this directory in digital and hard copy format to organisations and individuals throughout the county. The PPN collaborated with Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on the PPN Energy Master Plan for County Galway. Regular steering group meetings helped guide the project, which enabled 11 community centres to get free energy audits from the consultants which were engaged by the PPN and SEAI.

Kildare PPN, in collaboration with Kildare County Council, carried out the community consultations for the Local Economic Community Plan. Kildare PPN held 5 community consultations, one in each Municipal District area. Ninety-four member groups participated, and an invaluable amount of rich data was collected and submitted to the co-ordinator of the LECP. This data has been used in the drafting of the new plan. In further collaboration with Kildare County Council, the PPN ran the Community Grant information sessions attended by ninety-five members. It provided members with the knowledge needed to make a successful funding application. In building Vibrant Rural Communities through LEADER, Kildare PPN collaborated with County Kildare LEADER Partnership to help host a series of roadshows.

Community groups had an opportunity to share their ideas on how to build a vibrant rural community and shape the priorities of LEADER for the 2023-2027 funding Programme. Five workshops were held throughout the process, one in each of the five Municipal Districts.

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown PPN entered into a partnership with Dublin City PPN to provide a wide range of training for both PPNs. This action was taken due to the increased cost of providing training in the Dublin region and to ensure we provided value for money. The combined training was also offered to South Dublin and Fingal PPN who were not staffed at the time. DLR PPN regularly share information and attend DLR Integration Forum events and many of their members are members of other DLR PPN groups. DLR PPN circulate HSE and Healthy Ireland information and details of workshops. DLR PPN is a member of and participates in the DLR Community Response Forum. DLR PPN partnered with the Adult Education Service South-East to develop training on the use of digital technology in everyday life, the aim was to make technology accessible and prevent the exclusion of older members of our community. DLR PPN attended the launch of the Age Friendly DLR strategic plan and invited the DLR Social Inclusion officer to attend the spring plenary meeting to highlight the plan and the services available in the community to older persons.

Waterford PPN engaged with LCDC Workshops on "Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making". 3 MD working groups were piloted in collaboration with Waterford City and County Council, Healthy Waterford, Partnership, other agencies and stakeholders, elected representatives from each of the MDs and also community groups in the MDs. The PPN attended a collaboration half-day workshop with Sláintecare and Healthy Waterford in regard to the "Play Standard Tool" and also collaborated with Waterford Volunteer Centre, Waterford City and County Council (WCCC), Healthy Waterford, Waterford Community Safety Partnership, HSE, Sláintecare and did a roadshow during Volunteer week.

The PPN attend Older People's Councils (OPC) Age Friendly events and sit on the Steering Group of Waterford Comhairle na nÓg. The PPN were involved in the roll-out of Playful Streets with WCCC, Healthy Waterford and Waterford Sports Partnership.

Clare PPN is a member of Clare Traveller Community Development Programme's (CDP) steering group along with the HSE, Clare Local Development Company, Women's Collective Clare and West Clare Family Resource Centre. Clare PPN co-facilitated and organised the first of a series of 'Connecting Clare Communities' events with Clare Local Development Company and Clare Volunteer Centre. Clare PPN liaised with Clare Volunteer Centre on the Community Recognition Fund. This involved a media campaign with radio interviews, a podcast and a co-ordinated email schedule. More generally, this interagency collaboration took the form of partnerships with wide variety of statutory and non-statutory organisations and initiatives, actively working to address issues around social cohesion, housing, transport, education, mental and physical health, arts and culture, sports, literacy and sustainability for youth, older people, disabled people, LGBTQIA+, migrants, ethnic minorities and the wider communities they serve.

## Social Inclusion

PPNs are uniquely placed within communities to engage a whole range of marginalised groups and to support them to engage in democratic processes. Twenty-eight PPNs reported having engaged in social inclusion activities in 2023. Some examples of actions taken on behalf of the PPN in furtherance of their social inclusion agenda have included:

Meath PPN ran workshops in rural locations and used local community centres as far as possible. Using network contacts, the PPN engages with direct provision residents as well as providing information days with local migration support groups.

Carlow PPN has implemented various initiatives to actively support the inclusion of socially excluded groups, particularly communities experiencing high levels of poverty, discrimination, and marginalisation. The PPN has prioritised outreach efforts to connect with marginalised communities. This includes community meetings via 'PPN On Tour' organising meetings in rural areas to directly engage with groups and to understand their specific needs and challenges, partnerships with local organisations and collaborating with local stakeholders and community organisations that work closely with excluded groups, ensuring that their voices are represented. Carlow PPN has worked to ensure that consultation processes are accessible and inclusive with tailored consultation approaches and by adapting consultation methods to suit the needs of different communities, including the use of plain language, visual aids, and translated materials where necessary. Implementing feedback mechanisms for marginalised groups to provide feedback on policies and initiatives, ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Cavan PPN has engaged specifically with Cavan Disability Network this year in support of their flagship event under the Winter Plenary. This partnership has grown into a thriving support for those who might otherwise be at risk of being voiceless in civic society. The partnership is a very constructive one with PPN Secretariat and staff working on and alongside the Disability Network on co-hosting.

Clare PPN attended workshops by the Far Right Observatory (now called the Hope and Courage Collective) on countering far-right groups, attended Ukrainian Community Response Forums and continued to support Clare Traveller CDP through membership of the steering group. This involved recruitment and getting the CDP ready for CLG status along with the everyday support of the work of the CDP and attendance at Traveller CDP events. The PPN provided meeting space for unfunded groups who would otherwise have nowhere to meet. The PPN attended and contributed to Women's Collective Clare's International Women's Day event and provided support to Quare Clare LGBT group through membership of the steering group. This involved assistance around funding, board compliance, event planning and accounts. Clare PPN also marshalled the first Pride Parade in Clare. The PPN supported International Protection Applicants and the communities who welcomed them. This included one-on-one support, welcome events, hosted a banner making workshop for the #IrelandForAll march, a large Solidarity Shindig event, training facilitated by Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland (MASI) and a Secret Santa drive for adults in direct provision and managed a fund raiser locally for refugees and asylum seekers in County Clare.

Cork City PPN has a seat allocated on each Revitalising Area through Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID) and encourages groups to come forward during consultation. On the drugs and alcohol taskforce, these seats are specifically allocated to certain groups within the social inclusion pillar, e.g. one needs to be filled by group working with traveller/Roma communities, one to be filled by groups working with those who are homeless/at risk of homelessness.

Donegal PPN work closely with the Social Inclusion and Integration teams in Donegal County Council, Donegal Intercultural Platform, Donegal Travellers Project and the Local Development Companies in enabling participation. The PPN hold various events during the Council's Social Inclusion Week each year to include all.

Laois PPN supported the establishment of Social Inclusion groups in Laois for the migrant and active retirement communities. Laois PPN provided guidance to groups on establishment of a community group, how to conduct an AGM, holding of committee meetings, roles of the elected officers, registration of members and applying for a bank or credit union account. Laois PPN had Social Inclusion Representatives in 2023 on the Secretariat, LCDC, SPCs and JPC. Laois PPN's newly elected Representative in 2023 to the Board of Laois Sports Partnership is a member of a Disability Support Group.

Louth PPN is open to all groups and actively supports inclusion of socially excluded groups, including communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination (including new communities and the Roma and travelling communities) to take part and participate in Louth PPN. Louth PPN's Resource Worker attended the joint Meath and Louth LCDC Inclusive Community Engagement Training workshop. Using this training course as a foundation, Louth PPN actively sought to engage with community groups from socially excluded sectors of Louth's community through regular attendance at community events with one-to-one meetings with select members of the groups. This resulted in an additional 14 community groups joining Louth PPN in 2023 who identified themselves as being Social Inclusion groups. In 2022, Louth PPN had 5 new Social Inclusion groups join its membership. When comparing 2023 to 2022 figures, this equates to a 280% increase of new social inclusion members in 2023. Throughout 2023, Louth PPN collaborated with Louth Local Development and Louth County Council to identify barriers to women participating in the decision and policy making structures of Irish politics. This project involved working with women from all sectors of Louth's community. The input received from these different cohorts of women based on their lived experience informed the creation of the "Driving Equality for Women in Louth" report. The aim of this report was to identify the perceived barriers faced by these women as a first step to overcoming these barriers and enable these women to actively participate at both local and county level.

Dublin City PPN established a Migrant Thematic Group (MTG) in 2021 and the group met regularly online in 2022. In 2023, the consultant facilitator assisted the MTG to organise three events, which would assist their participation in local authority decision making. The first was an event to celebrate UNESCO International Book and Copyright Day. The second was a Mongolian photography exhibition (with song and dance) at EPIC Museum, as part of Dublin City Council's Inclusion and Integration week. Finally, members of the Migrant Thematic Group opened the May and November plenary with musical performances. The May Plenary was opened by the Latvian Choir, and the November plenary was opened by Rhythm Africana. The November plenary took place in the Gresham Hotel one week after the now infamous Dublin riots. Many people did not attend as they felt the city centre was still unsafe and conversations took place about the PPN's duty of care, especially to Rhythm Africana who are a group of black musicians. The decision was made to try and host anti-racism training for member groups. It is an ongoing concern for the PPN that member groups and particularly Representatives will have to work on committees with publicly known far-right activists.

Leitrim PPN work closely with the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) who provide funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion at a local level through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. We take part in Social Inclusion Week annually. We extend an invitation to all who register under Social Inclusion to attend the linkage group meetings.

Galway County PPN ran training for members on 'Inclusive Community Groups'. This training on inclusion and accessibility was very beneficial. The PPN widely promoted activities run by local community groups which are led by minority groups, across Galway County, in our newsletter, social media, and via email to our members. PPN Workers attended an information day for the LGBT community in Galway.

Mayo PPN collaborated with the Mayo Volunteer Centre to host a Community Volunteer Befriending Event. This event assisted community and voluntary organisations to reach out and recruit volunteers with additional needs and migrant volunteers. The event gave information and advice about the supports available to them in implementing best practice in volunteer management within their organisations. This workshop covered a range of support services to help community groups involve volunteers in a meaningful and effective way in their organisation, including providing advice and support. The event also included information on volunteer management training for community organisations, along with a range of resource material available to help groups to develop volunteer policies and procedures. This befriending event reached out and helped volunteers with additional needs and migrant volunteers to live a fulfilled life in our communities in County Mayo. Mayo Social Inclusion Awareness Week took place in October 2023. The theme for the 2023 Mayo Social Inclusion Awareness Week was Cairdeas (Friendship).

Waterford PPN sit on the Traveller Inter-Agency Group (TIG) Committee and engage with all social inclusion groups linking in and collaborating with SICAP, TREO Waterford<sup>5</sup>, Waterford New Communities, Community Integration team, Age Friendly and community safety initiatives. We also have Social Inclusion Representatives sitting on many boards and committees representing socially excluded groups etc.

5 Treo Port Láirge is a community-based organisation in Waterford.



Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown PPN and its membership actively participate in the DLR Festival of Inclusion. DLR Integration Forum are members of DLR PPN and circulate their information and attend their events. There are many new member groups from the new communities in DLR and they are active participants in DLR PPN. DLR PPN work closely with the local partnership company and circulate information on their Women's Interest Groups, Healthy Ireland, Engaging Dementia, Local Employment Services (LES) and Community Employment (CE) scheme opportunities and Social Prescribing, as well as promoting the initiatives of the Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) and attending the DLR Age Friendly Expo.

GCCN actively seek to include all socially excluded groups in all consultations, workshops and meetings as illustrated in our values and policies and positions. GCCN sit on steering committees and offer technical support to Access for All, Galway Traveller Movement, Galway Communities against Racism and Discrimination and a United Women's Group based in direct provision amongst others. Using the funding for the Pilot Engagement Project, GCCN have sought to ensure that Representatives from groups who are protected from discrimination under the nine grounds are actively engaged in developing process indicators for the Local Economic and Community Plan.

Kerry PPN actively supported inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination, including Travellers to enable them to participate, using the well-established library system. There are 9 libraries in County Kerry so all rural areas as well as urban were included. The libraries are inclusive, completely accessible and so there was an open-door policy for all. This gave the Kerry PPN an opportunity to bring the information out to the community and create a greater understanding of the PPN. This proved to be very popular, voluntary PPN Representatives attended the sessions, all information was broken down into user-friendly language and many new groups joined the PPN. There was also an increased awareness in the power of the PPN and the importance of becoming involved.

Kildare PPN have co-hosted Social Inclusion Week which aims to support social inclusion in communities in Kildare, for the last eight years. Kildare PPN encourage participation from marginalised groups, through supporting them in running events throughout the week and in some cases encouraging collaboration between groups to work together. A steering group is formed, and membership is encouraged from the social inclusion pillar. There are Representatives from the Traveller, Ukrainian, Roma, Disability and Access groups to mention just a few. This gives an opportunity for better engagement and inclusion, not just during the week but in the preparation and decisions taken in the run up to the event. It also acts as a platform to build long-standing relationships and pathways to engagement. In 2023, Kildare PPN were honoured to have two members of the Special Olympic team from Kildare open the event and display their medals.

Kilkenny PPN, through the work of the Kilkenny PPN Social Inclusion Pillar (KSIP) Linkage group continues to work to include and represent the most vulnerable and marginalised groups. Kilkenny PPN has elected Representatives from the migrant, traveller and other communities that are socially and economically deprived onto SPCs, JPC, LCDC and the Secretariat. The PPN was involved in the annual Traveller Pride Day. Throughout 2023, Kilkenny PPN continued to work with the Kilkenny Access to build their capacity and has assisted them in the consultation phase of the new County Council Disability strategy 2023-2028.

A Limerick Autism Friendly programme was offered to all LCCC staff and PPN member Groups. The training, delivered by Ability Focus, was taken up by 60 individual members of PPN Limerick Groups.

Monaghan PPN remains an active member of the LCDC Equality Subgroup which also includes the Integration Support Unit. PPN staff also attended dignity at work, and equality and human rights training.

Offaly PPN attends Traveller events, Traveller Pride and cultural exhibitions, engaging with key members in the community to encourage engagement. The PPN engages with members, linking with the Local Development Company, Local Authority housing section and Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) on projects in disadvantaged communities. This helps build relationships and helps encourage greater engagement of Travellers with the PPN. It is a slow, time consuming but valuable process. Members of the Traveller community now attend meetings, and they also showcased their health advocate work at the Nov 2023 Plenary.

Roscommon PPN has collaborated with numerous local development stakeholders to deliver a broad range of inclusive initiatives with marginalised groups. One such example of inclusive consultation in action was supporting new communities in the county to have their voices heard in new local policies and plans including the Migrant Integration Strategy and Local Economic and Community Plan (2023-2029). This entailed working with consultants involved in developing these local plans to adopt accessible consultative techniques and to ensure a physical presence at integration events in the county. Roscommon PPN, through the provision of their 2023 community training programme also provided a series of capacity building initiatives to all new and existing members including those most marginalised to support their groups development goals.

Wicklow PPN's collaboration with Wicklow County Council in developing the Social Inclusion Network Group as a subgroup of the Local Community Development Committee will ensure that the experiences and challenges faced by socially excluded groups are heard on a regular basis providing opportunities for peer support and local authority support where appropriate. Wicklow PPN actively participates in the Wicklow County Council Disability Access and Inclusion Committee (DISC). Members of DISC were invited to introduce the group, its work and the development of the Disability Toolkit for Community Groups at the Wicklow PPN community catch up meetings. A disability strategy was developed for the county during the year and launched at an event during Social Inclusion Week. A new committee page for DISC has been added to the Wicklow PPN website under the representation and committees tag. Wicklow PPN collaborated with the Women of Wicklow's Social Inclusion Network and County Wicklow Partnership to run an event to celebrate International Women's Day. Over 75 women from diverse geographic and social communities discussed what community means to them.

Westmeath PPN actively supports inclusion of member groups. One of the actions taken was to participate in 'Make Way Day'. The Disability Federation of Ireland in collaboration across the country with voluntary and local government sectors organised the event. Leading the charge were people with disabilities themselves, Westmeath County Council, Westmeath Community Development, Independent People with Disabilities, Athlone Access Awareness, Irish Wheelchair Association, Mental Health Mullingar, Airc Midlands and the local Garda Síochána. The organisations used an online tool designed for Make Way Day, to highlight obstacles that block the way and complicate the lives of people with disabilities. Some issues regarding footpaths that were too narrow were forwarded on to the Council. The campaign reached more than 1,000,000 people on social media and featured on RTÉ news bulletins on the day. It also received wide coverage in the local papers.

Tipperary PPN sits on the County Roma Project steering group, with a community development focus, to ensure that Roma have their needs met and are encouraged to have a voice on issues that impact negatively on their lives. The Representative attends all Roma events, which included the launch of a shocking housing report. This connection has led to the Roma women attending the plenaries. Plain English is used in all emails and in all documents, where possible. There is a PPN social inclusion Representative seat on all of the Local Authority SPCs, and two social inclusion seats on the LCDC. The PPN is active around the Migrant Integration Strategy and the PPN collaborated with the county council to launch their publication. Due to the re branding of our logo, we needed to source and update the promotional material. We developed, designed and translated into eight languages the new brochure which was funded by the County Council. The Roma women showcased their traditional crafts and art at the event, which Minister Joe O'Brien attended. In all LEADER project scorings, there is a social inclusion weighting evaluation. This is due to the impact of the PPN Representatives on the LAG.

In undertaking the Thematic Housing Network Housing paper programme, Sligo PPN Representatives worked with members from the social inclusion college including the Disabled Persons' Organisation (DPO) and the Traveller Support Group. This ensured that those individuals most at risk from a lack of adequate accommodation provision in the county were involved and had the opportunity to make recommendations to future housing policy. Sligo PPN worked with Sligo Family Resource Centre to host a welcome and inclusion event for migrants settling in Sligo. The event was part of the EU 50 celebration and explored what it meant to make Sligo home, what people loved about the county, what organisations could do to make the transition more positive and what do they miss about their birth country. The findings are being used to inform new projects in the county.





## 5. Work with the Local Authority

The PPN Handbook<sup>6</sup> states the “PPN will be the main link through which the Local Authority connects with the community, voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors” and “PPN will enable the public to take an active formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the LA’s area of responsibility”. The intention is for a collaborative partnership approach. Positive relationships between PPN and the Local Authorities are essential for success.

As part of the Annual Report process, Local Authorities were asked to provide examples of how they had supported the development of PPN and the active participation of environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary organisations in policy and decision making, information sharing and

capacity building (other than the provision of the Budget allocation or the core duties of the Resource Worker, where the Resource Worker is employed by the Local Authority). Table 6 provides a breakdown of supports identified in respect of all 27 Local Authority areas for which responses were received.

6 <https://assets.gov.ie/97296/79d48b54-0557-493e-9aa1-1d910364d41e.pdf>

**Table 6: Local Authority Supports to PPNs, 2023**

Support Mechanism	Number (n=27)
Active Memorandum of Understanding in Place for 2023	27
Memorandum of Understanding Reviewed in 2023	24
Assist, where appropriate, the PPN in achieving its Work Plan	27
Supported the PPN to be active Actors in the LECP	24
Cross-departmental participation in PPN Events	24
Involvement of Local Authority PPN Contact Person in PPN	22
Provided additional core funding to the PPN to support its work	15
Provided additional funding for specific PPN projects	10
Specific campaigns to promote the work of the PPN within the local authority	7

### Examples of Supports provided by the Local Authority

- Regular oversight meetings are held.
- Involved in the National PPN Implementation Roadmap Working Group.
- The provision of office space, information systems and services, utilities, and peer-to-peer assistance.
- Inclusion on consultations and strategies.
- Information provision and training to stakeholders.
- HR supports.
- Monitoring the budget and work plan.
- Capacity building supports.
- Governance and Corporate supports.
- Collaboration on outreach events.
- Some Local Authorities report allocating the position of Resource Worker to a Grade 6 employee.

### Local Authority Consultations

The PPNs can and should be a key mechanism for Local Authorities to gather the views of their communities in response to calls for consultations. They are best placed to engage with a membership of community groups and have a track record in producing and supporting submissions. Table 7 provides an overview of the number of consultations undertaken by Local Authorities in 2023 and the engagement with PPNs during this process.

**Table 7: Local Authority Consultations, 2023**

Consultations	No. of (n=27)
Notifications of Consultations sent to PPNs	357
Local Authority Consultations carried out via PPNs as the main vehicle	60
Consultation workshops jointly hosted by the Local Authority and the PPN	48

The number of consultation notifications sent to PPNs in 2023 was higher than in 2022 (from 302 to 357). The number of consultations carried out via PPNs as the main vehicle in 2023 was also higher than in 2022 (from 35 to 60) and the number of consultation workshops jointly hosted has also increased from 31 to 48.

## Specific Areas of Collaboration

Local Authorities and PPNs also collaborated on a host of other events and initiatives in 2023. These include:

- Community and Voluntary Awards
- Community Development Fund
- County Development Plan
- Dormant Account Fund Engagement Strategy
- Community Safety Conference
- Disability Strategy
- Biodiversity Action Plan
- Vision Rathvilly 2040
- Community Catch Up
- Vision for Community Wellbeing Community Support Scheme
- Project Tullow 2040
- Play Day
- Comhairle na nÓg Road Safety Day
- International Women's Day
- Community Associations/Multi stakeholder city labs
- Transport and Roads/Active Travel
- Cathaoirleach Awards
- PPN National Conference 2023
- Elected Member Breakfast
- Tidy Towns
- Healthy Ireland
- Age Friendly initiatives/Older People's Council
- Local Economic and Community Plan
- "Quiet Areas" research/Noise Action Plan
- Autism Friendly Initiative
- Women in Government
- Migration Plan
- Climate Action Plan
- Social Inclusion Week
- Live Well expo
- Walkability Audits/Make Way Day
- Dublin City Learning Festival
- Africa Day
- Laois Connects
- Disability, Access and Inclusion
- LEADER
- "Delivering for Communities – from Policy to Action" booklet
- Community grants information events
- Inclusive Community Engagement
- Town Centre First Regeneration
- Litter and Waste management
- Community Integration Forum
- Public Sector Duty
- Sustainable Development Goals
- LCDC
- Integration and Inclusion
- PEACEPLUS Partnership
- Love Where You Live
- PPN Roadshow

## Allocation of Community Seats

Local Authorities are responsible for a range of boards and committees in respect of areas of local interest. Examples of these include:

- Joint Policing Committee
- Local Community Development Committee
- Arts, Culture and Languages SPC
- Peace Partnership Committee
- East/North West/South East Fisheries LAG
- Community Culture and Wellbeing Committee

- Sports and Physical Development
- Regional Drugs and Alcohol Taskforces
- Age Friendly Alliance/ Older Peoples Councils
- Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity SPC
- Local Community Safety Partnership
- Water Services
- Roads, Road Safety and Transportation SPC
- Disability and Inclusion
- Marine
- Housing, Corporate and Culture SPC
- Planning and Strategic Infrastructure SPC
- Emergency Services
- Recreation and Amenity SPC
- Placemaking
- Night time Economy Forum
- Leisure and Social Development
- Quality of Life and Creativity SPC
- Citizens Engagement SPC
- Heritage Forums
- Active Cities Steering Group
- Town Teams
- Mayo Community Futures
- Libraries
- HSE Suicide Prevention
- Decade of Commemorations Committee
- Economic Development, Enterprise and Community SPC
- Columb Barracks Network
- Child and Young Persons Committees
- Comhairle na nÓg
- Healthy Communities Local Implementation
- Rural Task Force
- Sustainable Urban Mobility
- Riverine Project Committee

- LEADER Partnership
- Local Link
- Migrant Integration Forum
- Traveller Interagency Group
- Place Names
- Tourism, Enterprise and Economic Development SPC
- Connect For Life Committee
- Volunteering
- Drehid Liason Committee

## Grant Eligibility

PPNs act as an information hub for community groups in accessing information and supports about Local Authority grants. In recognition of this, and the role of PPNs in enhancing the efficacy of community groups through capacity building, training, networking and so on, some Local Authorities have made membership of the PPN an eligibility requirement for accessing grants. In 2023, from the 27 replies, 17 required community groups to be members of the PPN to be eligible for grants and 10 did not.



PPNs act as an information hub for community groups in accessing information and supports about Local Authority grants.”

## Training and Induction by Local Authorities

Eleven of the 27 Local Authorities reported providing specific induction or training to newly nominated PPN Representatives in 2023. Local Authorities also reported the provision of information packs, minutes of meetings and corporate policies, briefings in the relevant Directorate as well as induction and orientation to new committee members.

11 Local Authorities reported engaging in training or awareness building activities. The Local Authorities welcome continued training, funding, promotion and awareness and communications strategies from the DRCD to support the work of the PPNs.





# Appendix 1

## PPN Contact Details (October 2024)

PPN	Email	Website
Carlow	carlowppn@carlowcoco.ie	www.carlowppn.ie
Cavan	info@cavanppn.ie	www.cavanppn.ie
Clare	sarah@clareppn.ie	www.clareppn.ie
Cork City	info@corkcityppn.ie	www.corkcityppn.ie
Cork County	ppn@corkcoco.ie	www.corkcountyppn.com
Donegal	donegalppn@donegalcoco.ie	www.donegalppn.net
Dublin City	info@dublincityppn.ie	www.dublincityppn.ie
Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown	enquiries@dlrppn.ie	www.dlrppn.ie
Fingal	ppn@fingal.ie	www.fingalppn.ie
Galway City	info@galwaycitycommunitynetwork.ie	www.galwaycitycommunitynetwork.ie
Galway County	administrator@galwaycountyppn.ie	www.galwaycountyppn.ie
Kerry	ppn@kerrycoco.ie	www.kerryppn.ie
Kildare	admin@kildareppn.ie	www.kildareppn.ie
Kilkenny	ppnkilkenny@kilkennycoco.ie	www.kilkennyppn.ie
Laois	ppn@laoiscoco.ie	www.laoisppn.ie
Leitrim	info@leitrimppn.ie	www.leitrimppn.ie
Limerick	ppn@limerick.ie	www.limerickppn.ie
Longford	ppn@longfordcoco.ie	www.longfordppn.ie
Louth	ppn@louthcoco.ie	www.louthppn.ie
Mayo	mayoppn@mayococo.ie	www.mayoppn.ie
Meath	meathppn@meathcoco.ie	www.meathppn.ie
Monaghan	ppn@monaghancoco.ie	www.ppnmonaghan.ie
Offaly	ppn@offalycoco.ie	www.offalyppn.ie
Roscommon	info@roscommonppn.ie	www.roscommonppn.ie
Sligo	ppn@sligococo.ie	www.sligoppn.com
South Dublin	info@sdcppn.ie	www.sdcppn.ie
Tipperary	coordinator@ppntipperary.ie	www.ppntipperary.ie
Waterford	waterfordppn@gmail.com	www.waterfordppn.ie
Westmeath	info@westmeathppn.ie	www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/communitydevelopment/publicparticipationnetworkppn/
Wexford	ppn@wexfordppn.ie	www.wexfordppn.ie
Wicklow	info@countywicklowppn.ie	www.countywicklowppn.ie

# Appendix 2

## Overview of PPN Activity in 2023

\*Note that these figures relate to the returns made to the survey and are not the same as the Salesforce data contained above.

PPN	Number of PPN Representatives	Number of Active Linkage Groups	Number of Plenary Meetings Held	Number of Local Authority Boards and Committees with PPN Representatives in 2023	Hosting Arrangement	*Total Membership (incl. Assoc.)	*Social Inclusion Pillar Members	*Environment Pillar Members	*Community Pillar Members
Carlow	28	3	2	8	Hosted by Local Authority	364	36	12	316
Cavan	27	1	2	5	Hosted by another Community Organisation	356	90	26	240
Clare	14	8	2	8	Operating as an independent company	380	24	56	300
Cork City	27	5	1	8	Hosted by another Community Organisation	233	78	20	135
Cork County	36	4	2	12	Hosted by Local Authority	514	74	25	415
Donegal	63	3	2	14	Hosted by Local Authority	685	63	18	604
Dublin City	19	3	2	9	Hosted by another Community Organisation	791	215	23	553
Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown	33	0	2	11	Hosted by another Community Organisation	601	110	18	473
Fingal	22	5	2	10	Hosted by Local Authority	758	128	41	589
Galway City	31	6	4	10	Operating as an independent company	167	50	11	106
Galway County	41	1	2	10	Hosted by Local Authority	1268	246	45	977
Kerry	24	2	1	37	Hosted by Local Authority	1021	110	36	901
Kildare	20	2	2	11	Hosted by another Community Organisation	672	63	32	577

PPN	Number of PPN Representatives	Number of Active Linkage Groups	Number of Plenary Meetings Held	Number of Local Authority Boards and Committees with PPN Representatives in 2023	Hosting Arrangement	*Total Membership (incl. Assoc.)	*Social Inclusion Pillar Members	*Environment Pillar Members	*Community Pillar Members
Kilkenny	25	1	1	13	Hosted by Local Authority	442	93	31	318
Laois	29	5	2	12	Hosted by Local Authority	641	84	26	531
Leitrim	38	3	2	14	Hosted by another Community Organisation	390	84	14	292
Limerick	32	7	2	9	Hosted by Local Authority	200	57	10	133
Longford	34	14	2	10	Hosted by Local Authority	525	68	12	445
Louth	40	0	2	16	Hosted by Local Authority	637	140	18	479
Mayo	37	0	2	10	Hosted by Local Authority	1052	129	36	887
Meath	15	2	2	6	Hosted by Local Authority	630	86	14	530
Monaghan	39	0	2	13	Hosted by Local Authority	664	104	41	519
Offaly	23	5	4	6	Hosted by Local Authority	640	76	12	552
Roscommon	15	0	2	7	Hosted by Local Authority	647	45	16	286
Sligo	35	1	1	16	Hosted by Local Authority	564	43	13	508
Tipperary	49	19	2	19	Operating as an independent company	1606	204	52	1,350
Waterford	65	0	2	3	Operating as an independent company	592	67	25	500
Westmeath	24	5	2	10	Hosted by Local Authority	931	194	18	715
Wexford	15	1	2	14	Hosted by Local Authority	338	47	15	459
Wicklow	26	0	2	114,104.45	Hosted by another Community Organisation	575	83	33	321
Totals	926	105	60	343		18,110	2,652	921	14,537

# Appendix 3

## Impacts of the PPN in 2023

In 2023, the Department asked each PPN to provide some detail on the impacts of the work of their PPN.

### Carlow

As part of the Community Engagement and Data Collection for Tullow 2040, Carlow PPN conducted 'PPN On Tour' events across the 3 Municipal Districts of Carlow. All events were aimed at engaging with local community groups and gathering data for forthcoming Local Authority consultations. During the tour, Representatives met with member community groups. These meetings provided an opportunity to discuss local issues, gather insights, and foster collaboration among community members and the PPN. In addition to community discussions, valuable data was collected to inform the Tullow 2040 submission. This data will play a crucial role in shaping future initiatives and ensuring that community voices are represented in the planning process. In conclusion, the Carlow PPN tour in Tullow successfully strengthened relationships with local community groups and facilitated important data collection for the Tullow 2040 submission. Continued engagement with communities will be essential for the development of effective and inclusive strategies for the future.

Carlow PPN has undertaken significant efforts to enhance community capacity and knowledge through targeted training initiatives. To support local groups, the PPN conducted a comprehensive needs analysis to identify the specific training requirements of these member groups. Based on the findings, several training sessions were delivered to address these needs. The training provided included the following key areas: GDPR Compliance; Canva; Design software and social media strategies for the community sector. Through these training initiatives, the PPN successfully increased the capacity and know-how of community groups.

The needs analysis played a vital role in tailoring the sessions to meet the specific requirements of participants, ultimately strengthening community engagement and effectiveness.

Regarding representation, a request for inclusion of PPN in standing agenda items for SPC meetings was made. Carlow PPN has actively engaged with the Local Authority administrators of each Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) to enhance the visibility and involvement of the PPN in local government. This initiative aims to ensure that community perspectives and concerns are consistently addressed in policy discussions. The primary objective of this request is to facilitate ongoing dialogue between the PPN and the SPCs, promoting greater community engagement in the decision-making process.

Carlow PPN remains committed to advocating for the interests and needs of the community in collaboration with local authorities. Carlow PPN undertook a 'See Her Elected (SHE)' Workshop empowering women for elections in Carlow. Carlow PPN hosted a workshop from the SHE organisation, aimed at empowering women in rural Ireland to engage in local government as county councillors and campaign team members. The SHE organisation provides invaluable resources for women interested in politics, including free online political education and comprehensive educational resources available to participants. A practical guidebook that outlines essential considerations for women running for election or participating in campaign teams. A series of free workshops covering various aspects of electoral campaigns and governance. As a result of the workshop and ongoing support from SHE, three women from Carlow prepared to run for local elections. This initiative not only fosters individual empowerment but also strengthens community representation.

The collaboration between Carlow PPN and the SHE organisation has proven effective in encouraging women's participation in local government. The continued support and resources provided will be instrumental in enhancing female representation in local government in Carlow.

### Cavan

Cavan PPN hosted a series of public consultations for members of the public and community members of PPN on 'The Future of Local Democracy'. Public representatives, community leaders, community development staff and others partook in the consultations, and they formed a strong submission to the Senate Commission.

Cavan PPN hosted an event linking community insurance and finance support agencies whereby groups could directly engage with these service providers for the benefit of the group.

Cavan PPN launched three Municipal District roadshows to engage at a more grass roots level and better effect feedback to representatives from among the local communities on issues and solutions effecting the society of Cavan.

### Clare

Clare PPN has continued to be a connecting force to support diverse communities in Clare. Our members and staff on behalf of the members support and participate in Clare Traveller Community Development Project, Quare Clare LGBTQIA +, Clare Leader Forum and Clare Solidarity Network. Some of these organisations were originally instigated by the PPN in Clare and we assist them with administration, premises, publicity, accounts and event organising on an ongoing basis. Events in the community organised by these groups include the Solidarity Shindig (an intercultural gathering to help newcomers to our communities meet and integrate), Clare Pride Festival, Traveller Pride Clare, Secret Santa for new communities, training on International Protection and meet and greet coffee mornings where accommodation centres are opening in Clare.

A tumultuous few years being involved in community supports during the Covid-19 pandemic is resulting in reported burn out for many community activists and groups. We felt that it was time to rebuild, celebrate our successes to date and to share our suggestions for the future of Clare communities. As a result, Clare Local Development Company, Clare Volunteer Centre and Clare Public Participation Network got together to create an event 'Connecting Communities in Clare', an afternoon of networking and workshops for volunteers, activists, community leaders, charity trustees and members of community groups. It gave community and voluntary groups in Clare a chance to be inspired, revitalised, and connected and to learn practical skills around collaboration, participation, advocacy, communication, inclusion, resilience building, telling your story and more. It was very well attended and people got a chance to meet others in the community who are making a difference.

Clare Traveller Community Development Project (CDP)'s Strategic Plan was launched in May by Minister Joe O'Brien. Clare PPN continues to support this project as it reaches its goal of becoming fully independent and led by the Traveller community in Clare. The existence of the Traveller CDP has enriched public consultation in County Clare already ensuring that Travellers experiences are represented in the input. Traveller input was integral to the report 'Towards an Anti-Poverty strategy for Clare' and was also included in our project to enshrine socio-economic rights in the Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029.

Clare PPN's community engagement project, to ensure that policies reflecting the lives of the diverse communities in Clare who experience poverty and other forms of discrimination are included in Clare County Council's Local Economic and Community Plan, was included as a case study in the Department of Rural and Community Development's 2nd edition of 'A Guide for Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making'. At the launch in Dublin in November, Clare PPN Co-ordinator presented key transferrable skills learned throughout the project and a Secretariat member also took part in a panel discussion on the importance of marginalised voices in policy and decision making.

## Cork City

Cork City PPN distributed information to member groups about funding, training, networking events and other capacity building initiatives. Cork City PPN undertook the consultation for the Vision for Community Wellbeing and used content from that to feed into PPN submission to the Cork City Council consultations for the Local Economic and Community Plan 2024-2029 and for the Climate Action Plan. Cork City PPN empowered members with local and national democratic knowledge. Facilitation training was provided. Cork City PPN are a trauma sensitive informed organisation which was ratified at a Plenary.

## Cork County

Cork County launched the Vision for Community Wellbeing Statement. This was over a years' worth of work due to having eight Municipal Districts. In person consultations were held in each MD. Some were better attended than others but there was a very poor attendance overall. Cork County MD is too large to make any real impact at MD level. The Vision considers all aspects of community life and is set out across under the headings of Participation, Democracy and Local Government, Values, Culture and Meaning, Social Community Development, Work, Economy and Resources, Health, Environment and Sustainability. Looking at community wellbeing under all these different headings means that participants had to really think 'outside the box' and understand how all these different factors interact to impact on quality of life. The Vision which they have produced will form the cornerstone of the PPN and the results are already feeding into the Local Authority policy making. Consultation, communication and collaboration between voluntary and community groups that make up the Public Participation Network was the key to success for achieving people's vision of a healthy, strong community.

## Donegal

Donegal PPN Winter Wellness event in December 2023 focused on mental health as Donegal experienced quite a number of local people committing suicide from August to November 2023. The Event had speakers from Mental Health Ireland (MHI), Health Service Executive (HSE), ATU, Pieta House, Donegal Wellness Cafes and training on how to set up a Mental Health Champion in organisations. All the stakeholders and support groups had stands at the event and a handout with crisis helpline phone numbers and support group details was circulated.

Donegal PPN and An Garda Síochána ran various property marking events throughout the County. They are an invaluable crime prevention deterrent that benefits the whole community and Donegal JPC Representatives have met with senior Garda to work with them on various issues throughout the year.

## Dublin City

In 2023, the Dublin City PPN received an additional grant from Dublin City Council for capacity building activities and worked with six consultant facilitators to increase the capacity of member groups, so that more member groups might be involved in decision making at local authority level. The benefit to the PPN member groups of having a very knowledgeable team of people to assist staff was extraordinary.

The PPN hosted a 'Festival of Fundraising' to help PPN member groups become more financially sustainable. The festival included online, offline, morning and evening sessions for all member groups including an introduction to fundraising, a grant writing session, a session for writing a fundraising strategy and a session looking at the specific challenges for migrant groups, which may not have the same networking opportunities as other groups. The potential impact for groups to be more financially secure was felt to be very important during a cost-of-living crisis and after many groups had staggered through a pandemic.

An interesting impact of the festival was an offshoot project, based on a DRCD guidebook launched in 2023, called “A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making”, which was uploaded to the PPN website here: <https://dublincityppn.ie/resources/presentation-on-the-recently-launched-a-guide-for-inclusive-community-engagement-in-local-planning-and-decision-making/>

Many member groups appreciate the information shared in the very accessible weekly bulletin. In particular, groups have thanked the PPN for updates from the Department, such as new logo details, or information about the awareness campaign. Groups have also been happy to share their information, resources, and updates with the wider PPN through the weekly bulletin. Much time and work went towards making it fully accessible for blind and visually impaired people, and to try as much as possible, to use Plain English.

### Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown

The DLR PPN has developed strong, regular communication with the member groups. In addition to the monthly online newsletter, the monthly Community Connections Radio Programme, social media and website posts, the membership is updated via a weekly email. The ‘5 year plan consultation’ has brought to light that DLR PPN is considered a trusted source for information for the local community. The ezine is particularly valued, with many community groups submitting news every month.

Due to the limited budget and increasing costs of doing business, in DLR we have developed partnerships with other organisations to deliver our programmes and to ensure that our funding is used to provide the greatest value for money possible. DLR PPN partnered with libraries and the Adult Education Service South East. We also partnered with Dublin City PPN to provide shared training for both sets of PPN members spreading the cost and providing a variety of training that otherwise would not have been possible. We also offered this training to the other 2 Dublin PPNs that were not staffed at the time.

### Galway City

The first of its kind in the country, the ‘Galway City Civil Society Panel’ draws members of communities protected by the Irish Equality Legislation and aims to facilitate and support the effective and transparent implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty by those duty bearing organisations and agencies in Galway City. Using a human rights-based approach, it recognises these communities as rights holders and public agencies as duty bearers that are obliged to respect and protect their rights. The Panel engages with public agencies and uses their expertise to guide agencies in their implementation of the Public Sector Duty.

The Civil Society panel was reconvened and played an active role in the Pobal Pilot Project. The panel worked collaboratively with GCCN and other agencies to develop a range of community indicators. This work builds on the Toolkit for the Implementation of Public Sector Duty in Galway, and the Social Inclusion Group Book of Evidence developed by Values Lab. The Pobal Pilot Project was initiated to aid the involvement of the most marginalised groups in the city in shaping the new LECP. This initiative also seeks to provide insights for a national set of Engagement Guidelines for marginalised groups. The project collaborated with various communities including the Deaf Community, the LGBTI+ Community (with a specific focus on trans and non-binary members), Traveller women, women residing in Direct Provision, LGBTI+ youth, and young individuals facing socio-economic challenges. Engagement with these groups took place through workshops, individual interviews, in person and online focus groups, as well as surveys. Emphasising participation, the project facilitated the involvement of these communities in project planning, development, and the dissemination of essential messages and actions to influence the upcoming LECP. The outcomes of engaging with communities and the Civil Society Panel were transformed into an actions book and a video. Notably, the project significantly influenced the new LECP, incorporating twenty-one actions from the action book.

GCCN and several other organisations in Galway, such as Galway Traveller Movement, Galway City Partnership, Galway Council of Trade Unions, along with groups like Galway Anti-Racism Network, Amach! LGBTI+ Galway, University of Sanctuary, and Community Knowledge Initiative University of Galway have united as Galway Communities Against Racism and Discrimination Network (GCARD). The goal is to advocate for inclusivity in communities and stand against all forms of racism and discrimination. Throughout the year, GCCN maintained a vital role within the GCARD network. To mark the International Day Against Racism, GCCN collaborated with GCARD groups to arrange a rally in Galway City Centre, demonstrating solidarity with those experiencing racism and discrimination while standing against the rise of far-right ideologies. GCCN was instrumental in securing funding for GCARD via the newly implemented National Action Plan against Racism. Moreover, GCCN actively engaged in GCARD's monthly meetings supporting efforts to combat racism and discrimination in Galway.

### Galway County

Galway County PPN created a comprehensive information booklet in A5 format, 21 pages long, with a full version in both English and Irish. This information booklet provides an informative and user-friendly summary of the PPN. We distribute this booklet widely at PPN events and meetings, to new PPN Representatives, to stakeholders, council staff, and to new PPN member groups in digital or hard copy format.

### Kerry

The support from Kerry PPN has a significant and far-reaching impact on the Kerry Community Awards and local community groups. The Kerry PPN acts as a platform that raises the profile of community groups, offering them the recognition they deserve for their work. This visibility can lead to more support, including financial or volunteer contributions, boosting the group's capacity to deliver services.

By being part of the PPN, groups gain access to vital information regarding funding opportunities, grants, and other resources. Kerry PPN's weekly newsletter serves as a vital communication tool that has a significant impact on the local community in several ways. The newsletter provides a platform for sharing information on local events, community initiatives, grants, training opportunities, and news relevant to community groups and organisations. This helps keep the community informed and engaged with ongoing developments. By offering information on public consultations, community forums, and decision-making opportunities, the newsletter encourages community members to become actively involved in local governance. The Kerry PPN weekly newsletter often highlights opportunities for community groups to collaborate, share resources, and support each other. It strengthens networks among local organisations, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Kerry PPN providing capacity building and training to community groups has several significant positive impacts on both the groups themselves and the broader community. Through training and capacity building there is increased empowerment, knowledge and skills of local communities. Capacity building and training strengthens the community resulting in increased participation and engagement in consultations. Kerry PPN's capacity building and training initiatives significantly strengthen community groups with the skills, knowledge, and networks they need to make meaningful contributions to local development, governance, and social cohesion.

Kerry PPN information roadshows in libraries had a significant positive impact on both the community and local governance. Libraries serve as community hubs, making them ideal locations for public engagement. Hosting PPN roadshows in libraries allows a wider section of the public to learn about the PPN, its role, and how to get involved in local decision-making processes. Since libraries are frequented by people of all ages and backgrounds, roadshows held here can engage groups that may not typically participate in community governance activities, such as the elderly, youth, or marginalised communities.



The roadshows encouraged more residents to join the PPN, leading to increased community participation in shaping local policies and decisions. Through information sessions, residents learn how they can influence public services, policies, and development in their local areas, empowering them to take a more active role in local government.

## Kildare

Social Inclusion week has become a highlight in the Kildare calendar over the last eight years and each year this event grows with greater participation year on year. In 2023, over sixteen events took place throughout the county focusing on promoting inclusion within our communities. As a result of Social Inclusion Week, several initiatives and partnerships were formed, directly benefiting those within the community. Focus for this week is the inclusion of members of the community who may otherwise be excluded for various reasons and each event keeps at its core the importance of attracting and welcoming people from all communities.

The findings from the consultations that we held across all Municipal Districts with our member groups (including in-person and online surveys) positively influenced many actions within the new Kildare LECP for 2024-2029, ensuring that the voice of the community was heard.

136 people representing a wide variety of community groups in Kildare completed training during our winter training programme. This programme included, community leadership, tech and social media, governance and grant applications. All modules are based on the results of a training needs analysis to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the community groups and closing skill gaps were required.

Kildare PPN collaborated with LEADER to help host a series of roadshows. Community groups had an opportunity to share their ideas on how to build a vibrant rural community and shape the priorities of LEADER for the 2023-2027 funding programme. Five workshops were held throughout the process, one in each of the five Municipal Districts.

## Kilkenny

Kilkenny PPN in collaboration with Kilkenny Local Authority and Kilkenny LEADER reviewed the Migrant Integration Strategy. As part of the implementation of the Migrant Action Plan, Kilkenny PPN and Kilkenny Local Authority undertook a series of workshops to encourage women and diversity.

## Laois

Laois PPN's Climate Action Project 2023 was a year-long calendar of events for all PPN member groups, the aim of which was to raise awareness, educating and inspiring positive Climate Action initiatives in our communities. Highlights of Laois PPNs Climate Action Project 2023 included: Free native Irish Tree giveaway to Community Groups across Laois; Climate Action Funding Workshop; Heritage Bike Tour in Vicarstown during National Bike Week to promote Active Travel; Biodiversity Walk and Talk in Portlaoise, and Portlaoise Tidy Towns (Portlaoise has been designated Ireland's first Low Carbon Town); A Tree for Peace – Planting Ceremony for the Ukrainian Community, during National Tree Week; Winter Wander in Abbeyleix – Winner of Ireland Tidiest Town 2023 and a Guided Biodiversity walk of Abbeyleix Bog Project – considered one of the finest Community led conservation projects in Ireland. The Laois PPN Climate Action Project was recognised with significant positive media coverage in Laois in the Leinster Express, Laois Nationalist, Laois Today and Laois People of each event. At a regional level, Laois PPN presented on our project at the meeting of Laois, Offaly, Longford, Kildare, Meath and Westmeath PPN. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Change invited a report on Climate Activities of PPNs, their member groups and the potential for them to mobilise further Climate Action. Laois PPN was selected to contribute to a workshop on this report, with its Climate Action Project 2023 being selected as one of three case studies, showcasing the potential positive impact and role the PPN could play nationally on Climate Action. Laois PPN has been shortlisted by the EU for the European Union Climate Action Pact.

The Laois Community and Voluntary Awards 2023 ceremony was held on the 3rd of November 2023 in the Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise, hosted by Laois PPN and Laois County Council and the awards long term sponsor People First Credit Union. Nominees who were all PPN member groups were honoured in eight categories for their contribution to community life in Laois, including an individual Unsung Hero Award and a newly established Climate Action Award. The Awards showcase annually the great work that is being undertaken locally by the Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors in County Laois.

### Leitrim

Three linkage groups were set up in 2023 with eleven facilitators trained. Linkage Groups bring together organisations with a common interest to discuss their views and interests in a specific policy area linked to committee or board with PPN representation.

Leitrim PPN were very involved in events throughout the year as well as sponsorship of The Love Where You Live Awards in conjunction with Leitrim County Council. Leitrim Public Participation Network sponsor two sections of the Love Where You Live Awards, Social Inclusion and Community Resilience. In 2023 there were over 98 entries across 6 categories and there were 37 Prize Winners and there were 246 attendees at the awards night.

A fortnightly e bulletin was circulated to all member groups with valuable information on funding, training, consultations, surveys, submissions and community news. There were 15 items in the local Leitrim Observer increasing the visibility of the PPN locally.

### Limerick

Limerick PPN, delivering on actions detailed within their Strategy for Inclusion of Under-Represented Groups, worked with LCCC in the development of the Limerick Migrant Integration Forum and offered administrative and governance guidance and advice. The PPN was delighted to attend and deliver a presentation to the then nascent group at their launch event to highlight future engagement with the PPN as the formal route to reach a stated goal of the forum which is members participating in local government decision making.

When the Community Recognition Fund was announced the PPN organised a workshop delivered to member groups in the eligible areas. The workshop was organised with the department in LCCC who would be administering the grant. Members were able to ask questions and receive feedback on initial proposals.

### Longford

Longford PPN Intercultural Forum consists of various different nationalities who were brought together to work on an arts project. The group were awarded funding through the Community Grant Support Scheme. It was an opportunity to promote integration, inform members of the various sections of LCC and start preparing them for the local elections due in 2024.

### Louth

Every year, Louth PPN undertakes a number of community engagement projects in order to increase awareness of the PPN, encourage collaboration between different PPN members, thereby strengthening ties within the community and engage with our PPN member groups. In 2023 one of these projects was the community peer-to-peer mentoring project. Louth PPN provided training for 13 PPN members from across the county in the skills required to become a mentor. These individuals already had a wide range of skills and experience gained from working within the community and voluntary sector (as well as within their own work environment). Areas of expertise include committee skills, activity and event management, completing funding applications and social media.

These individuals committed to volunteering 2 hours of their time per month to share their experience, knowledge and expertise with other community groups who may be less established. This means that the membership of Louth PPN effectively has 26 hours of free mentoring available per month from fellow volunteers who understand the struggles faced by community groups who are there to help them build their capacity (i.e. the community helping the community through grassroots supports).

Building on a 2022 co-hosted seminar entitled 'Increasing the diversity of women in Local Government', Louth PPN looked at the issues facing women in their day-to-day lives which act as barriers to actively participating in the policy and decision-making structures. This project was a collaboration between Louth PPN, Louth County Council and Louth Local Development. The initial stage of the project involved bringing a wide range of women from all backgrounds together to ascertain what the general perceived barriers were. It became clear during these discussions that although there were common themes within the perceived barriers, some women had additional barriers to contend with. To explore these additional barriers further, smaller focus groups were then held with women facing these (e.g. age, sexuality, disability, addiction, culture and ethnicity, etc). The findings from all of these workshops (the general, larger group as well as the smaller focus groups) were then collated into a report entitled "Driving Equality for Women in County Louth" which was formally launched September 2023. This report details the issues faced by women which require addressing at both local and national level if true equality is to be achieved.

Committee skills training for youth members project was a collaboration between Louth PPN, Comhairle na nÓg and Healthy Louth and was another of Louth PPN's community engagement projects in 2023. 30 youth members from across the 3 municipal districts of Louth were trained in committee skills. It is hoped that this action will not only support youth members to represent themselves and their peers in the immediate future but will help build capacity for future boards and committees for years to come.

## Mayo

Mayo PPN Community Climate Action open evening was for PPN community groups. The evening included information on the new Climate Action Fund and the community projects that are eligible for funding. The Climate Action officer gave a comprehensive presentation on what's happening and how other community groups can replicate the actions in their own communities. The School of Engineering in the National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway, presented to the members on climate action projects underway and was seeking the public's knowledge and help to build a toolkit which supports communities on how they can reduce their carbon emissions and impact climate action in County Mayo. As part of this event, the tourism section in Mayo Co Council was reaching out to communities to investigate whether there is an opportunity to develop short term camper van facilities. This would be 24 to 48 hours at various short term camper van facilities. Community groups were invited to make submissions. The event was highly interactive with over 150 people in attendance and provided groups with information on how Mayo can move towards a more climate friendly county. Presenters from the local radio station expressed an interest in attending and used the opportunity to interview community groups on how they were addressing climate change. Following on from the event, Mayo PPN were invited to collaborate with Midwest Radio in sourcing PPN member groups to speak on the local radio station on how they were addressing climate change and biodiversity in their communities. It involved a weekly feature on Midwest Radio promoting a project or an initiative that relates to climate action in Mayo and how it can be replicated by other communities. There was huge uptake in submissions from PPN community groups and the promotions took place for over the course of a year on the local radio station. The Climate Action videos were subsequently promoted on Mayo PPN social media platforms and the PPN website. This was a wonderful showcase of how community groups were addressing climate change and biodiversity in County Mayo and how it can be replicated in other communities throughout the county.

## Meath

Engagement with Climate Action officer and PPN groups lead to a larger than expected number of attendees at an online workshop. This led to 2 other workshops and support in completing the funding application. We expect the Meath allocation to be close to 100% awarded in first round.

2023 was the first full year with the Secretariat and Staff in place since 2020. With return to in person meetings, 2 plenaries and MD events, Meath PPN saw a significant growth in number of participants at events and an increase in awareness of the network. Interactions on social media and response to newsletters also increased.

Following plenaries, training needs were identified and scheduled with all training being offered by Meath PPN were fully booked out each evening.

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## Monaghan

A lot of our smaller PPN groups have availed of Local Authority and other state agency funding streams purely from the information distributed. Particularly with the Local Authority funding, this is aimed at smaller, easier to access funding which groups find easy to apply for and has a large impact on their group.

Secretariat members had discussed the option of holding a women's safety conference to tie in with the global 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. After discussion between the PPN staff and the community development worker, an application for funding was made under the Department of Justice Safety Innovation Fund. This funding was approved. The conference was held November 2023 and was hugely well attended. Speakers included the CEO of Safe Ireland, representatives from An Garda Síochána Crime Prevention Unit and the Divisional Protective Services Unit. All the feedback from the conference was presented in the afternoon to the Joint Policing Committee's annual public meeting.

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## Offaly

Offaly PPN encouraged groups to engage in Culture Night activities. The PPN also promoted the range of events throughout the county. This piece of work was hugely invaluable in our work engaging with cultural minority groups. This was an excellent opportunity for groups to showcase their cultural identities through music, song, dance, dress and food. It also provided the larger communities with an understanding of the new communities. It led to a number of groups establishing themselves with a view to joining the PPN in 2024. The PPN supported the cultural minority groups by sharing information and directing the groups to supports available.

Offaly PPN made a concerted effort to engage with Comhairle na nÓg members in Offaly. This involved attending meetings and presenting on the role and value of the PPN. The PPN needs the voice of young people in Offaly, so we were delighted to engage with the youth voice and see how we could harness it more effectively. It proved very successful. The young people showed great interest in the PPN and how it had voices at the table on different boards and committees. They took a particular interest in how the PPN could influence and shape policy. They were interested in the workings of the Strategic Policy Committees. In conjunction with the Community and Culture Strategic Policy Committee, the PPN Secretariat negotiated that 2 members of Comhairle na nÓg could hold one of the PPN positions in a shared capacity. This pilot proved very successful and brought new insights and the authentic voice of young people to the Strategic Policy Committee.

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## Roscommon

Roscommon PPN developed their Vision for Community Wellbeing document which involved engaging with local groups, articulating their goals and aspirations for the future and identifying what is needed to support future generations and make Roscommon a great place to live, work and invest in.

A new brand was developed for Roscommon PPN in 2023 including the development of a suite of new marketing resources in line with new national PPN branding, thus delivering user-friendly content for communities.

New methods to promote enhanced community engagement were also adopted over the course of 2023 including the delivery of a series of online funding webinars to support communities accessing Local Authority funding across various disciplines.

Roscommon PPN also led the delivery of a collaborative community training programme for groups in partnership with key local development stakeholders. The collaboration reduced the duplication of training offerings with communities and maximised local resources.

## Sligo

Through the development of 'The Dream of Fódhla'<sup>7</sup>, Sligo PPN brought together art and the environment – engaging the arts community in positive climate action. The initiative is a unique approach to consultation and engagement which saw a group of community workers, artists, activists, poets and writers came together over four weekends to explore an artistic vision for a sustainable and inclusive Sligo

Sligo PPN worked in partnership with Sligo Disabled Persons' Organisation (DPO,) to launch the 'Navigating Ordinary Things' initiative, an exciting and interactive project exploring, via social media, the barriers faced by disabled people in County Sligo. As well as raising awareness of these important issues, the intention is that Representatives in Sligo PPN will also be able to use the videos as an evidence base to raise issues at decision-making tables and inform local policy development. In the 'Navigating Ordinary Things' project, each film takes a different aspect of the barriers faced by disabled people in Sligo including 'the importance of participation in the decisions that affect us'.

Sligo PPN was honoured to contribute to the OECD Environment Directorate report 'Redesigning Ireland's Transport System for Net Zero: Towards systems that work for People and the Planet' (2022). The report was produced at the request of the Climate Advisory Council, and it aims to show that as a society we can maintain wellbeing while reducing emissions. Sligo's involvement in the launch came as a result of prior engagement with OECD research which saw the authors visit the county and speak to PPN Representatives about their vision for a sustainable transport system. The report references Sligo PPNs Vision for Community Wellbeing with the authors stating "The results of the public consultations informing the Sligo Vision for Wellbeing confirms that people consider the provision of access to schools, friends, places and services via sustainable modes as the main contribution that the transport sector can make to improve their lives". The report also mentions the Sligo group came up with the slogan "Shared places and friendly faces"! Some of the OECD suggestions are reflected in the transport section of the 2023 Climate Action Plan and in Sligo and elsewhere we will see a move towards enabling active and sustainable travel.

Under Power to Change<sup>8</sup>, Sligo PPN and Atlantic Technological University (ATU) have put in place a number of initiatives that have supported community groups from all sectors (sport, mental health, active retirement, community facilities) to engage in positive climate action. There is in place a mentor support programme to help applicant groups devise and implement environmental change. An online support portal has been developed to help with emerging queries with an interactive toolkit based on community need and the PPN have devised an SDG workbook that is to be rolled out nationally across primary schools.

7 <https://www.sligoppn.com/the-dream-of-fodhla-towards-a-sustainable-and-inclusive-sligo/>

8 <https://www.sligoppn.com/the-power-to-change/>

## Tipperary

A Community Climate Coach (CCC) Project was funded by Pobal from January 2023 for 18 months, with Tipperary PPN as the formal partner. For this county project, there is the good practice of a strong partnership approach with the informal partners, who are South Tipperary Development CLG (STDC) and North Tipperary Development Company (NTDC) and the lead partner, Cloughjordan Ecovillage. The participants were recruited in 2022 and 30 (6 in each MD) were ready to start training in 2023. In-person and online training continued up until summer. Nature connection, systems change, and community mapping were the main trainings in-person, delivered in different geographical areas in the county. The main aim, to engage workers or active volunteers from socially excluded groups to engage them in climate change awareness and potential small fundable projects, had challenges, including the participants being busy in their own work or volunteering, and attendance being erratic with some. Even so, MD hubs were formed that still are active. The teams hosted two community conversations around the nature connection, systems change, and community mapping training. Travellers, youth and older people were all included in the attendees, starting to grow connection and support around the climate change crisis, in marginalised or seldom heard cohorts of society. Tipperary PPN were actively involved in the recruitment of marginalised or seldom heard groups, through the PPN Social Inclusion Pillar. The continued support of coaches from those groups was through a diversity worker in the project. The project is creating stronger engagement for the Environment Pillar. Nationally, Tipperary PPN were invited to the Community Climate Action showcase event held in Dublin Castle in November 2023. We showcased the CCC project with Cloughjordan Ecovillage and South Tipperary Development Company. It is thought we were invited due to the national PPN conference workshop input that the coordinator delivered in October 2023.

The Clonmel Quality of Life Alliance was formed by a new Local Authority funded project with Sláintecare. It has focused, so far, on one municipal district town with high unemployment and substance misuse issues.

Many actions were developed around the table, including increased information-sharing and consultation with community groups, schools etc in the town. The PPN became involved in the connection exercise with local groups through PPN Pillar membership. It became clear through the information exchange with the groups and on the forum, that recreational drug use was affecting every level of the town's society, with a negative impact on sports, criminality and employment. It was decided to form a substance use working group and the PPN was an active member within this structure. The PPN Representative is also the SERDATF Representative and could link the issues to a wider regional forum and so developed stronger policy supports for the subgroup and, subsequently, the inter-agency forum itself. The PPN further supported the Sláintecare project through sharing the facilitation role of two world café community conversations. One meeting was held for clubs and community groups. There was also a business and retail conversation. This inter-agency forum has grown strong locally specific professional relationships and collaboration to the extent that through the enhanced work done, it was decided that there should be research into the Planet Youth project, from Iceland. It gives all young people in Transition Year of the schools that choose to be part of it, a voice, through an anonymous, detailed survey on their well-being, including their drug use and mental health. Once analysed, the needs of young people will become more clarified and specific services and funding can be sought and allocated more precisely, for more impact to support young people navigate today's societal challenges.

After the Covid pandemic, opportunities to gather in-person felt like celebrations. The 2023 Spring Plenary was such an event. It was very much a community-led action, with the Secretariat being fully involved in the planning through the plenary planning sub-group. It was in a South Tipperary community hall in Rosegreen, close to the middle of the county, with local volunteers running it, even down to making the refreshments and being hands-on on the night. The music came from a Men's Shed from one town and the guest input (Life Coach for the under-represented) came from another.

Comhairle na nÓg gave an inspiring presentation on using the Lundy Model<sup>9</sup> in their work and hopes for their youth council objectives. The county council staff always fully support the PPN plenaries, and this one had a presentation about being consulted on the LECP and how to strengthen the community voice in it. The community stands ranged from the Community Climate Coaches, One Town, One Voice (creating community choirs), BeWell Health to South Tipperary Development Company. The evaluation forms from the 73 attendees were positive, especially about the plenary content, the networking and being in-person. The Autumn Plenary in 2023 was again community-based and in the middle of the county again, but just north this time in Holycross. Numbers were up even more and again, had a party feel as people came together in the world café style setting. Presentations were around energy champions, Plain English through the new ETB Regional Adult Literacy Co-ordinator and a community shop showcase with the county council staff doing a funding application support piece. They both had PPN business depending on the time of year e.g. budgets, annual workplan, agreeing the MOU with the county council etc but always there is the ratification of newly nominated Representatives since the last plenary. These Representatives attend and it is an opportunity for the groups to meet with them, put a face to the name and inform them of their issues and opinions. Tipperary PPN values the connection, information and opportunities that the plenaries bring. The amount of funding we have to deliver every event is coming out of a smaller and smaller pot. If the PPN council staff liaison worker didn't value the work of the PPN and didn't resource it as best as is possible, the event would noticeably fall short of the quality the PPN groups experienced in 2023. This only takes a change in personnel, to someone with a different mindset, to lessen the support that is strongly needed to continue the PPN Plenaries.

## Waterford

Waterford PPN did a huge piece of work rebuilding and updating the PPN website page which now includes a dedicated page with access to all funding locally and nationally, vacancies, consultations, toolkits, how to set up a resident's group, constitution templates, community and voluntary insurance, funding tips videos, directory of members and lots more.

A mandatory requirement was introduced for all new members to upload their constitutions when registering online as a member. This reduces the time spent by staff chasing up their documents post registration via email. It was also in line with a discussion we had with Waterford City and County Council in regard to trying to make funding applications simpler for community groups and it was agreed that those applying for grants must provide their PPN numbers to Waterford City and County Council in order to be eligible to apply for grants or funding. It promotes the work of the PPN, ensures ongoing contact and updating of changes. It also proves to the Council that those who are receiving grants are eligible as they value and trust our processes, and the PPN Staff would know the background of the groups and its members.

## Westmeath

Westmeath PPN brought forward 70 submissions to the two districts of Westmeath County Council. It is expected that these will have a success rate of over fifty percent. Some had to be referred to other bodies and some were refused for budgetary reasons. The issues cover a very broad range from issues such as wheelchair accessibility of footpaths, dumping to road safety. This leads to a better more vibrant community interaction.

Westmeath PPN invited a staff member from the Alzheimer Society of Ireland to give a presentation at one of our plenary meetings. This helped disseminate important information regarding dementia to groups throughout the county. It is one group sharing its expertise with the rest creating a stronger network.

9 [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/lundy\\_model\\_of\\_participation\\_0.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/lundy_model_of_participation_0.pdf)

Westmeath PPN in conjunction with Westmeath County Council ran funding workshops and clinics with groups in both Mullingar and Athlone. This informed member groups of what grants they could qualify for, what would be involved in the application process and answering any queries they have had. This leads to stronger groups more intimately linked to the PPN.

A Community Garda addressed one of our Community Safety, Crime and Policing Linkage group meetings. She informed the group all about community policing and topics of interest at the time. Community groups present then had the opportunity to raise issues that affected their groups. Bonfires and the associated anti-social behaviour were of particular concern to many of the groups. This was the PPN making a difference in the community.

Westmeath PPN compiled reports to each JPC meeting. This outlined what actions Westmeath PPN and its Representatives on the JPC were taking to support the five-year plan of the JPC. For instance, in relation to the misuse of drugs, Westmeath PPN through its Representative on the MRDATF continues to highlight drugs and alcohol misuse and report on relevant areas and issues of concern from and within the communities of Westmeath.

## Wexford

One of Wexford PPNs main objectives is informing its members. With that in mind, Wexford PPN's monthly news bulletin was reviewed and improved. Information was more targeted, more informative and issued on a regular basis. The bulletins were well received and members were complimentary on the content.

Wexford PPN hosted a community growers "Garden Fork to Kitchen Fork" event in association with Healthy Ireland in Enniscorthy. This involved a wonderful demonstration of seasonal vegetable soup by the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) and expert garden advice, including how to prepare, grow, and maintain flower and vegetable pots and containers and support insects and bees as well.

Wexford PPN issued an invitation to community and voluntary groups in Wexford to join their PPN and help build a better future for the county. The call out was part of a new national brand identity and awareness campaign for Public Participation Networks which was launched by Minister for Community Development and Charities, Joe O'Brien. This helped to increase registrations.

## Wicklow

Wicklow Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) was 1 of 4 LCDCs that received funding from the Dormant Accounts Funded Engagement Project. Wicklow PPN worked in partnership with Wicklow County Council (WCC) and an independent facilitator to identify and pilot engagement strategies that might encourage the participation of harder to reach communities in local planning and decision making. As a direct result of this work, WCC produced "Wicklow LECP – Delivering for Communities – from Policy to Action", a booklet that links the Local Economic and Community Plan to direct and visible development in the county. Wicklow's work was presented at the showcase event run by Pobal and the DRCD in October and at the national Community and Voluntary Civic Forum meeting in November. It is also included in the new edition of "A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making".

As a direct result of the Dormant Accounts Funded Engagement Project work, a Social Inclusion Network Group (SING) was formed as a subgroup of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). This is also an action in the new Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). The purpose of the network is to provide a forum for regular communication between marginalised communities and groups working with a social inclusion remit at local level, and the local authority and other support agencies as well as providing an opportunity for networking amongst all member organisations. It will also examine and discuss relevant plans and programmes and review their impact in the community as well as identifying and addressing any gaps or needs in service provision. The group held an inaugural meeting in July and a further development meeting in October 2023.



Meetings were held in each of the 5 Wicklow Municipal Districts in the first half of 2023 in collaboration with Wicklow County Council. The aim of these meetings was to provide feedback on the Vision for Community Wellbeing /Local Economic Community Plan consultations held in 2022. Lack of feedback following consultations with communities was identified as a hugely frustrating issue for groups during the Dormant Accounts Funded Engagement Project (DAFEP). Information was also provided about the Wicklow Disability and Inclusion Committee, Wicklow Age Friendly Programme, and Wicklow Volunteer Centre at these sessions. The events also provided an opportunity for peer networking and support.

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# Appendix 4

## Examples of Successful Consultations in 2023

### Carlow

Carlow PPN made a submission to Ireland's Fourth Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan 2023-2025. The aim of the Fourth Open Government action plan is to enhance transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness through active engagement by citizens. Carlow PPN used the Vision for Community Wellbeing to form the basis of the submission aligned around 4 core OGP Action Plan themes. These were Transparency and Accountability in Public Office; Citizen Decision-making; Public Access to Government Data and Strengthening Public Trust in Government. The PPN submission was based on feedback from groups based in County Carlow. Three questions were asked which provided actionable solutions for the OGP. Which theme does your proposed government action relate most closely to? What specific action do you think the government should take to make government more open, transparent and accountable in relation to the thematic area? How would the proposed action contribute to achieving the objective and making government more open, transparent and accountable in the thematic area? In summary, the answers reflected the understanding that complex policy challenges cannot be resolved by the government alone. Citizens must be engaged in the policymaking process which results in more informed decisions. This involvement helps ensure that policies and services are more effectively tailored to meet people's needs. Additionally, it provides better insights into how the public may react to new or revised policies and services. When citizens and service users are involved, they gain a clearer understanding of the rationale behind decisions and are more likely to trust that progress is being made in the right direction. A copy of the OGP submission is available on the Carlow PPN website.

### Cavan

The Future of Local Democracy consultations established by the Senate featured inputs from civic society. Cavan PPN organised a public online and in-person consultation workshop to harvest inputs and submitted these. Cavan PPN also engaged in the following consultations: West Cavan/Leitrim Greenway Consultations; Disability in Cavan; Crover Lakeshore consultation; Con Smith Park Masterplan Consultation; Greenway Public Consultation; Abbeylands Regeneration Consultation; LECP Consultations; Peace Plus Consultations; Inclusive Planning and Consulting Community Engagement Workshop; Belturbet Town Plan Consultation; Failte Ireland Consultations; N3 Bus and Parking Aitkins Consult; Bailieborough Town First Pilot Consult; Virginia Bypass Consult; Council ID Bathing Waters; Cavan Town Local Transport Plan; National Insurance Feedback for NGOs; Dublin Rd Safety Pavement Consultation; Climate Action Plan; Con Smith Park Ph 2; Digital Local Government; Bailieborough Town First Consult Plan; LGMA Dig and ICT Survey; The Future of Local Democracy; LECP Consultations Part 2; Virginia River Bridge Public Consultation; Cavan Older Person's AGM Event; Launch of new Civic/Cultural Centre; Cavan Heritage Plan Consultations; Consultation on Migrant Integration; DRAFT Climate Action Plan; Kingscourt Greenway Consultation; Childminders Consultation and Garda Strategic Plan 2025-27.

## Clare

A research project led by Clare PPN aimed to ensure that socio-economic rights and Just Transition principles were embedded in Clare County Council's new Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). Funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development through the Dormant Accounts Fund, this initiative was a collaborative effort involving multiple agencies, including the Clare County Council, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, Clare Local Development Company, and the Think Tank for Action on Social Change (TASC). The project's core objective was to integrate the voices of marginalised communities in policymaking, ensuring that the LECP would address socio-economic disparities while supporting a fair transition to a low-carbon economy. The project began with Clare PPN issuing a tender, which led to the selection of TASC as the research partner. The research aimed to build on previous work done by Clare PPN, particularly the "Towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Clare" report and to gather new data through a series of focus groups and training workshops. These activities were held across various municipal districts, including Shannon, Scariff, Ennistymon, and Ennis, with significant input from local communities and organisations such as Family Resource Centres. Clare PPN held sessions with people who have migrated to Clare, International Protection applicants, beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine, disabled people's grassroots organisations and with the Traveller community. These sessions were designed to gather insights on how to incorporate socio-economic rights and Just Transition principles into local policy in a way that would reflect the lived experience of the various communities in Clare. A significant outcome of the project was the submission of research findings to Clare County Council, influencing the LECP's strategic goals. This submission was followed by ongoing collaboration with the LECP steering group, ensuring that the perspectives gathered from the community were reflected in the plan. The culmination of this work was the launch of the "Fair Clare – Securing Socio-Economic Rights and a Just Transition in County Clare" report.

This publication, greeted with great interest, provided a comprehensive analysis of how the transition to a zero-emissions economy could impact structurally disadvantaged groups in the county. Overall, the project underscored the critical role of inclusive consultation and multi-stakeholder collaboration in shaping policies that are both equitable and sustainable. The insights and recommendations from this initiative are expected to guide not only the LECP but also future policymaking in Clare, ensuring that socio-economic rights and just transition principles are central to the county's development strategies.

## Donegal

An Garda Síochána proposed to amalgamate Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim as one Division. Donegal PPN and our JPC Representatives put forward a submission outlining the reasons why Donegal should be a stand-alone division. The decision was reversed and Donegal stayed as a stand-alone division.

## Dublin City

Dublin City PPN member groups had previously explained that there were barriers to making submissions and replying to surveys. Some of those barriers were time, resources, knowledge and 'know how'. Dublin City PPN felt that it could help member groups with at least the knowledge and 'know how' aspects of making submissions. Dublin City PPN tasked a consultant facilitator with developing a response to the Local Economic Community Plan (LECP). Working with several PPN member groups in one-to-one sessions, they conducted semi-structured interviews to discover what member groups wanted to see included in the LECP, highlighted in the LECP, or commented upon. They facilitated the discussions, and wrote a document based on the combined work of the member groups. It was this document that was then sent into DCC as the first joint, co-created PPN submission. It was the hope of the PPN that this work would form the basis of a new chapter in the 'how to' manual, called 'How to make a submission', which remains incomplete.

However, the submission itself was uploaded to the PPN website, so that other member groups could read it, and use it as a template, and it can be accessed here: <https://dublincityppn.ie/resources/ppn-submission-to-the-lecp/>

### Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown

Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown PPN made a written submission using the data gathered during the Vision for Community Wellbeing consultations and from the Vision surveys to the Local Economic Community Plan. DLR PPN recognised that the data gathered during the Vision project has a unique significance and enormous value and should be included in the new LECP. We also organised and held a Social Inclusion Workshop on behalf of the council.

### Galway City

It was felt that the consultations undertaken for the Green Paper on Disability Reform worked well as staff attended consultations with Department staff in Athlone and engaged with disability rights campaigners such as Access for All and DFI. The consensus was that the paper was not fit for purpose and should be scrapped which it eventually was. A submission was made, and much time and resources went into the submission.

### Kilkenny

Kilkenny PPN made a submission to the County Council draft Climate Action Plan. Kilkenny PPN invited the KCC Climate Action Team and Biodiversity Officer to the PPN Spring/Summer Plenary to present on the upcoming Climate Action Plan and Climate Action Fund with a view to inform and gather input from community organisations and groups which are registered with the PPN. Later during the year KPPN facilitated an online information evening with the County Council Climate Action Team for member groups and other interested community groups around the draft Action Plan and the upcoming Climate Action Fund and following this session circulated a survey to all the attendees and PPN members to provide feedback on the draft Action Plan.

In addition, KPPN offered community groups a series of online Climate Action workshops, including Planting for Climate Change, the Circular Economy and Food waste, to support community groups when taking Climate Action in their community and when applying for funding under the Community Climate Action Fund. The feedback from the PPN survey on the draft Action Plan was collated and then used by members of the Secretariat and PPN Representatives who sit on Local Authority committees and boards to compile a comprehensive and joint submission on the draft plan, taking regard of each PPN pillar. The submission not only fed into the draft Climate Action Plan but also was then used by the Local Authority to inform the New Biodiversity Plan. Several recommendations made in the PPN submission were included in the adopted plan.

### Laois

Laois PPN was identified as a key stakeholder by Laois County Council in the Laois Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028. As a result, Laois PPN were invited to a one-to-one stakeholder meeting with Laois County Council and the Consultants. Laois PPN formed a 4 person LECP sub-committee that consisted of 1 Community and Voluntary, 1 Social Inclusion and 1 Environmental Representative and the PPN Co-Ordinator. The LECP PPN sub-committee also included a member from each of the 3 Municipal Districts in Laois. The PPN LECP sub-committee met directly with Laois County Council and the consultants regarding the new LECP. The PPN sub-group also put their recommendations in writing to the Council. As the main link between Laois County Council and the community groups in Laois, Laois PPN raised awareness of the public consultations taking place in the 6 locations in the County. There was a large attendance of PPN member groups in each location. Laois PPN also raised awareness of an online meeting or those that could not attend in person. Subsequently, Laois PPN has been identified as either the lead stakeholder or partner stakeholder in 12 actions of the high-level goals.

## Leitrim

A public call for submissions into the Leitrim Climate Action Plan 2024 was disseminated across all member groups through Salesforce list email and social media, with an encouragement for groups to make their own individual submissions and fill out a survey. Leitrim PPN set up a PPN Linkage Group for Climate Action, Environment, Heritage, Biodiversity and Agriculture, composed of a wide variety of community and non-profit organisations. This linkage group met on three occasions to discuss proposals to the Leitrim Climate Action Plan. As part of this process, a public meeting was also called by a member group where a range of proposals were raised and discussed by civic leaders, academics and experts interested in the area of energy. The submission reflected an overarching approach from Leitrim PPN and noted some of the priority issues that were heard from members. A detailed submission was sent to the council and Leitrim PPN are partners on 12 actions in the Leitrim County Council Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029.

## Limerick

PPN members were invited to take a soundwalk (a listening walk) in the People's Park, the principal park in Limerick City and Clancy Strand to investigate the sounds - of nature, social interaction, play - both by measurement of characteristics (by binaural analysis) as well as their perceived response and to discuss LCCC approach to designating Quiet Areas as part of its Noise Action Plan. This event was organised with a scientist from Environmental Services. The event was shared widely with members with a Webinar regarding the principals and background to "Quiet Areas" delivered to members before the walks.

## Longford

Longford PPN Representatives met with the Longford County Council Director of Service for the Infrastructural SPC and engineer to consult on works to roads, paths and housing. As the Social Inclusion Representative includes disability, this was a very informative meeting. Explanations were given in relation to what LCC could do or whether a section of a path was raised due to underground wiring for broadband etc.

Plans and photos were presented and discussed. Both sides had a clear understanding of the situation. It was also agreed to look at putting together a policy for vulnerable people in relation to housing especially those in addiction or with mental health issues.

## Louth

Louth PPN worked closely with the newly appointed Climate Action Team who were responsible for rolling out the Community Climate Action Fund within the county. The team engaged with Louth PPN at an early stage in the process and kept Louth PPN staff informed of any decisions made on the fund. Throughout the process, the team undertook multiple consultations and information sessions with PPN member groups and the general public (both in-person and online) and made themselves readily available to answer queries relating to all aspects of the funding process. As a result, there was a high level of engagement from the public and PPN member groups, resulting in a number of community groups successfully being awarded funding.

## Mayo

Mayo PPN held consultation workshops for the Vision for Community Wellbeing Statement asking the question, 'If we woke up in the morning and County Mayo was the best that it could be – what would that be like?' Thinking about the Wellbeing of our communities is an approach that allows us to work out what the different parts of our county would look like if they were perfect. This would take into account everyone's needs, across all aspects of our lives, to ensure that wellbeing is achieved for all. These consultations were held in each of the Municipal Districts and following this all the inputs were gathered and written up to produce a Vision for Community Wellbeing Statement. Mayo PPN looked at community wellbeing under six headings; social and community development; environment and sustainability; work, economy and resources; health; values, culture and meaning; and participation, democracy and good governance.

This document sets out what the member groups have agreed and describes what they want to see achieved and that will ensure a well community. The Vision for Community Wellbeing Statement is what the people of Mayo want to see for this and future generations. The PPN also conducted an online survey seeking submissions from community groups. Mayo PPN and community groups in Mayo are delighted on getting the process to this stage. The VCW Statement and indeed Mayo PPN is all about giving a voice to the community and supporting the amazing community and voluntary effort across the county.

### Meath

Meath PPN conducted a series of online and in person workshops, inviting groups to find out about the Community Climate Action Fund and link with the Climate Action Officer in Meath.

### Monaghan

The PPN facilitated consultations for the LECP and Peace Plus. These were well attended, and feedback was forwarded to the relevant sections.

### Roscommon

In relation to public consultations, the Local Authority and PPN collaborated on multiple local policy formulations, including the new Local Economic and Community Plan (2023-2029), Local Development Strategy, Local Authority Climate Action Plan (2024-2029) and the Vision for Community Wellbeing. A first of its kind approach in delivering co-ordinated dual consultations, the “Planning Roscommon Together” initiative has been highlighted as national best practice by the Department of Rural and Community Development through their publication of “A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making”. The innovative concept also received an awards nomination under the “Best Communications Category” in the 2023 Local Authority Members Association awards.

### Sligo

Sligo PPN Transport Forum consultation was undertaken following the identification of transport as a key wellbeing issue in our Vision for Community Wellbeing programme. The intention of the research is to feed directly into an initiative outlined in the LECP which was to establish an active transport forum for the county as part of a long-term planning process. The hope is that Sligo County Council will accept the consultation and subsequent report and recommendations as a key information tool raising awareness of the transport priorities for the Sligo community. The write up of this consultation has been presented in full to Sligo County Council and will be used by SPC Representatives on relevant SPC committees as well as by the community Representative elected to the county transport forum. The effectiveness of the consultation lies in that it was developed purposely to inform a key LECP strategy focus and to help speed up the implementation of action by already providing a strong information basis.

### Tipperary

The development of Tipperary LECP is an example of close working relationships with all relevant agencies. As the PPN is involved, via all three pillars, on the LECP Advisory Steering Group, the initial LECP consultation process in 2022 and the drafting of the six-year plan itself, has created a much closer working relationship with all sections of the county council, especially the Economic and Enterprise Development, the Community and Rural Development and the Environment and Climate sections. This may enhance the influence of the PPN in this process, increasing the community voice’s impact in the county policymaking structures. We aim to develop these potential future alliances further via collaborative opportunities. Through also working well with the other member organisations on the LECP, there is an energy to maintain the steering group throughout the lifetime of the LECP as a monitoring body. This means that there is a long-term approach to county collective action. This continuation, and the goodwill already present, ensures that the PPN will continue to impact on the community work progressing in the county, as well as local decision-making, through cooperative partnerships.

## Westmeath

Westmeath consulted on the Review of the Wage Subsidy Scheme (Disabled Persons), also contacting groups on our database that were involved in the sector, many of whom made their own submissions. The Secretariat also submitted a submission from Westmeath PPN.

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## Wicklow

Wicklow PPN understood that the Law Reform Commission (LRC) consultation paper on the Liability of Clubs, Societies and other Unincorporated Associations raised concerns about liability for community groups. It is also a complex issue and has an impact on risk management and insurance cover. Wicklow PPN approached the Law Reform Commission (LRC) in relation to this issue. The LRC assured Wicklow PPN that they are very aware of the contribution that community groups make to society and they did not want to impinge on community activity through the reform. However, they pointed out that issues in relation to larger unincorporated associations needed to be addressed. The LRC welcomed submissions from PPNs and suggested that while they did not have the resources to engage with all PPNs and their members, they would accommodate an information session across PPNs. Wicklow PPN set up an online information session with the LRC and invited other PPNs to attend. The session facilitated a better understanding of the questions being raised in the consultation paper and the background and context for them which in turn supported the development of the Wicklow PPN submission.

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