



Carlow Public Participation Network 2017 Annual Report

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Foreword from the Secretariat

It is with great pleasure that we present to you our 2017 Annual Report. We hope that you will find this report very informative and interesting and that it will give you a good understanding of the range of work undertaken by Carlow PPN in 2017.

For PPN's to work effectively; Government Guidelines outline three main objectives for PPN's: -

1. Facilitate the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary sectors on decision making bodies
2. Strengthen the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate
3. Provide information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary sector and act as a hub around which information is distributed and received

These Guidelines also specify several principles and values that PPN's are expected to operate by; they should be inclusive, participatory, independent, valuing of diversity, transparent and accountable.

To keep these objectives to the forefront of Carlow PPN while also understanding these cannot be achieved overnight, in 2017 Carlow PPN Secretariat began work on creating a Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 to ensure these objectives were written in to all the work of the PPN. We also began working on the process of creating a Community Consultation Toolkit in 2017 to try and ensure as much participation and engagement of members of Carlow PPN in all plans for the County of Carlow.

John Murphy
Current Facilitator

Foreword from Carlow County Council Chief Executive

Active citizenship involves people, communities and voluntary organisations having a key role in decision-making which directly affects them. Carlow PPN was established in October 2014 as the conduit to ensure this happens.

The PPN structure enhances the ability of Carlow County Council to reach out to communities and hear their issues. Community members can take advantage of real participation and engagement within our community be it through Carlow County Council committees or other boards/organisations PPN Representatives sit on. This in turn challenges Carlow County Council to improve our services as communities' capacity to participate meaningfully through the PPN is further developed.

Carlow County Council is working and will continue to work with the PPN to establish and maintain this meaningful connection and to change how Carlow County Council consults with the public and communities.

Kathleen Holohan

Introduction

Carlow Public Participation Network (PPN) is an independent umbrella organisation of environmental, social inclusion and community and voluntary groups/organisations within County Carlow. As a framework for public engagement and participation, the PPN highlights and encourages participation in public life and people's right to influence decisions that affect their lives and communities.

PPN's were established under the Local Government (Reform) Act 2014 and are the main link through which the County Council connects with local groups/organisations.

The purpose of Carlow PPN is to: -

- ✓ Bring together community & voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups across the County and enable these groups to express a diverse range of views and interests
- ✓ Facilitate community participation in local decision making by providing representation on local decision making boards and committees
- ✓ Provide the opportunity for networking, information sharing and communication
- ✓ Identify and support training in relevant areas for groups and representatives



3
Staff
Members



12
E-BULLETINS



Carlow PPN

YEAR IN REVIEW



14
Secretariat
Meetings /
Capacity
Building



13
Training Events
for Members



398 LIKES



212
FOLLOWERS



381 MEMBERS

333 - Comm & Vol
8 - Environmental
40 - Social Inclusion



Operation of Carlow PPN

Secretariat

The Secretariat is the administrative body of the PPN, elected from the membership to manage the PPN between Plenary meetings and to manage the worker. Secretariat membership is balanced on a geographical and college basis and includes one representative from each of the Municipal District areas and two representatives from each of the colleges – Community & Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental. Carlow PPN Secretariat operates to an annual Workplan and meets on a monthly basis.

Flat Structure

The PPN operates as a flat structure, where the Plenary is the decision making body and there are no permanent officers i.e. Chairperson, Treasurer or Secretary. Decisions are made on a consensual basis. To implement the flat structure, Carlow PPN Secretariat has a rotating Facilitator. The meeting Facilitator rotates on a quarterly basis to ensure consistency in work. Working Groups were also established in 2017 to allow for the progression of work between Secretariat meetings and are as follows: -

- Support & Strategy Working Group
- Finance Working Group
- Council Liaison Working Group

Co-ordinator

The PPN Co-ordinator reports to the Secretariat and supports the Secretariat and the Plenary in their work. Carlow PPN Secretariat were directly involved in the recruitment of the Co-ordinator in 2014 and again in 2017.

Formal Agreements with Local Authority

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Carlow County Council and an annual Workplan along with a projected Cashflow Statement is agreed yearly with the Chief Executive of Carlow County Council.

Budget

Carlow PPN is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development & by Carlow County Council. The yearly budget is €80,000 - €50,000 provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development which was matched by €30,000 from Carlow County Council.

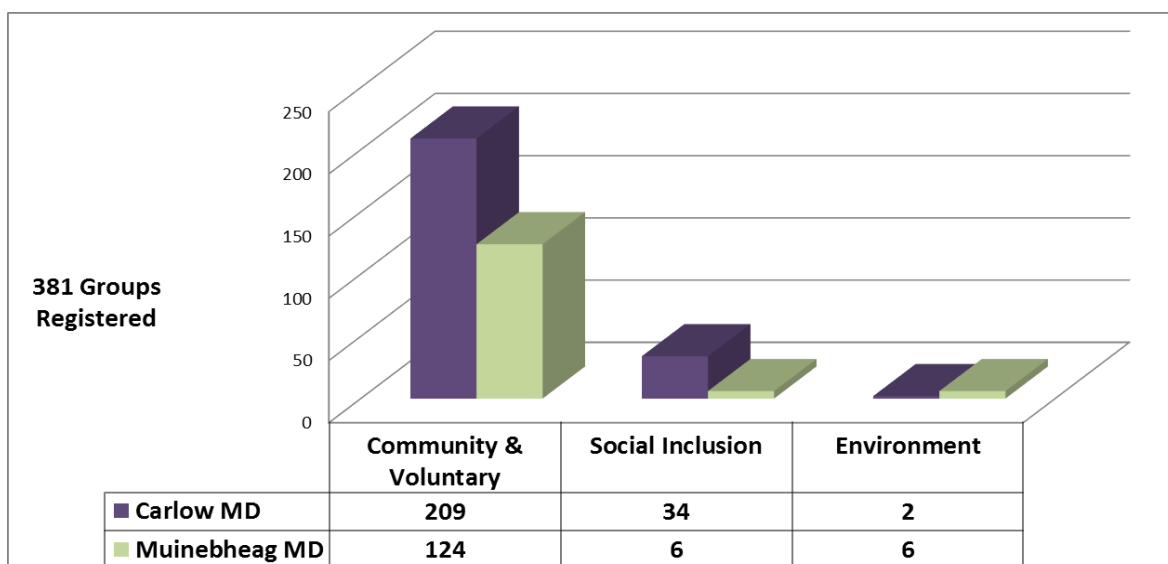
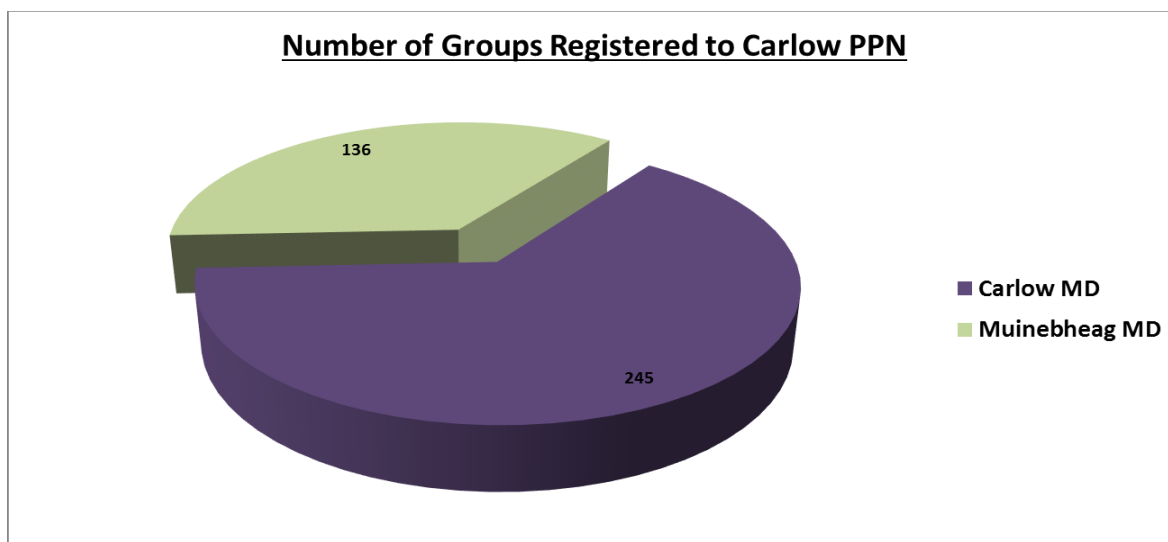
Total expenditure in 2017 was €80,485.68 and is broken down as follows: -

2017	Actual Expenditure
Staff Salary (incl. PRSI)	€41,480.40
Expenses	€842.14
Rent / Hosting	€4,000.00
Postage / Telephone	€204.79
Office Supplies / Stationary	€4,364.66
Insurance	€450.00
Website / Hosting	€461.25
IT Support & Maintenance	€641.28
Marketing and Promotion	€6,177.98
Advertising	€6,935.12
Projects / Activities / Events	€658.70
Room Hire / Refreshments	€2,887.86
Consultancy-Training / Development / Graphic Design	€11,381.50
Total Expenditure	€80,485.68

Membership

Membership of Carlow PPN is open to all volunteer led / not for profit organisations within the county. Groups are divided into three colleges based on their area of interest: Environment, Social Inclusion and Community and Voluntary¹.

At the end of 2017, 381 organisations/groups were members of Carlow PPN.



¹ Organisations self-select the 'College' they wish to be part of. Groups wishing to be part of the Environmental College must have their application approval by the National Environmental Pillar. Further details are available on <http://environmentalpillar.ie>

Implementation of SalesForce

The Department, in conjunction with the South Dublin Volunteer Centre have developed a Salesforce based software package to manage PPN databases all over the country and facilitate targeted communications. This has been rolled out to PPN's via group training sessions and support.

The database provides a means for each PPN Resource Worker to gather and manage a database of member organisations, contacts within the PPN area. It also provides a facility for the Resource Worker to manage a variety of communication processes and events such as email campaigns, newsletters, workshops and training events and to log and track meetings and attendances at meetings. The information gathered also provides data for reporting.



Representation and Decision Making

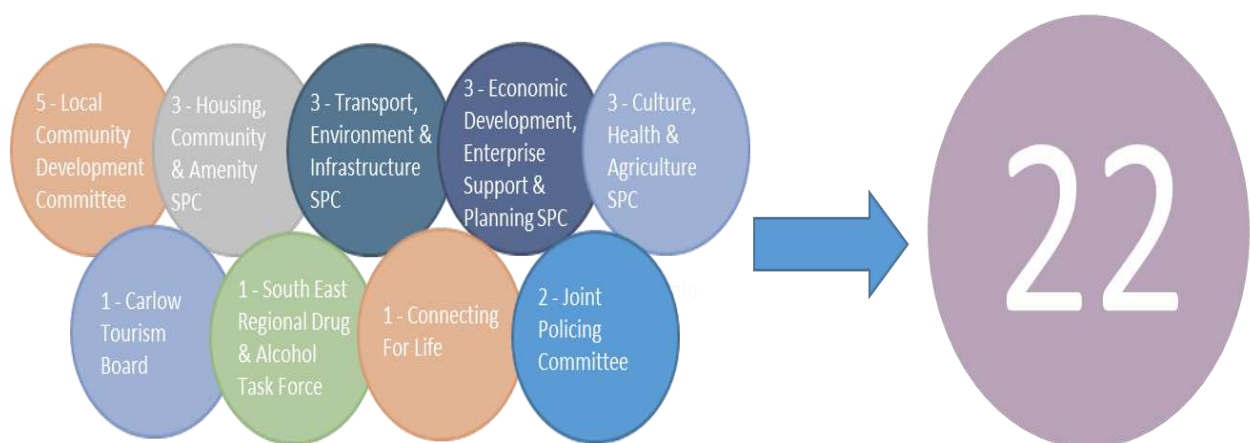
One of the core objectives of Carlow PPN is to facilitate the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion and community & voluntary colleges on decision making bodies. A variety of methodologies are used to ensure this.

Representation on Boards/Committees

Where a Local Authority or any other Board/Committee within the county requires community & voluntary, social inclusion or environmental representation on a Board/Committee, they must source this person via the PPN. Thus, PPN members can play a part in policy development and decision making within their county.

According to the guidelines, an individual should represent the PPN on only one Board/Committee to which Carlow PPN is compliant which ensures fairness.

In 2017, Carlow PPN had 22 seats on 9 committees across the County. 21 seats were filled with 1 vacancy on the Joint Policing Committee.



Support for PPN Representatives

It is imperative that PPN representatives bring forward the views of the PPN and not their own personal views. To facilitate this, the Linkage Group structure comes in whereby the PPN stakeholders on a particular issue come together to elect and advise their representative(s) on each board/committee. PPN representatives consult with their Linkage Group and each other before each meeting to discuss the agenda items and inputs. After each meeting, a summary template of the outcomes of the meeting is completed and disseminated to the relevant Linkage Group. This builds capacity and understanding of the policy process within the community.

Carlow PPN provides training/capacity building to its representatives every year which has always been well attended and were involved in the development of a Representatives Charter. All policies and procedures can be viewed on our website – www.carlowppn.ie

Linkage Groups

Carlow PPN operates a thematic Linkage Group structure and have 6 Linkage Groups: -

- Community
- Health & Wellbeing
- Culture & Amenity
- Social Inclusion
- Environment & Infrastructure
- Economy & Industry

Linkage Groups are thematic sub-groups of the PPN which correspond directly to Council services. They bring together PPN members that have either a remit or an interest in these services. Linkage Groups provide a mechanism through which the PPN influences policies and decisions made by the Council. Linkage Groups elect representatives from amongst their membership to sit on Council committees and other fora on behalf of the PPN. Through these representatives, the PPN participates in shaping policies that affect Carlow communities, and is kept informed of developments within the Council.



Communications

Communicating the existence and activity of Carlow PPN is essential in its functioning and one of the main aims of Carlow PPN is to provide the opportunity for networking, information sharing and communication. The 2016 Annual Report on PPN's, commissioned by the National PPN Advisory Group and published in 2017, recognised the lack of awareness and understanding of PPN's across the country.

Carlow PPN has been making strides in this area by introducing a number of initiatives: -

E-Bulletin	In 2017 Carlow PPN issued 12 E-Bulletins by email to all members and was sent by post to those with no email address.
Website	Carlow PPN's website was developed in 2016 - www.carlowppn.ie .
Social Media	Our Facebook and Twitter pages can be found @CarlowPPN. At the end of 2017, Carlow PPN had 398 likes on Facebook and 212 Followers on Twitter. We also created a YouTube Animation - @CarlowPPN to explain what the PPN is about.
Radio Interviews	Radio interviews were conducted throughout the year to publicise upcoming events and Plenary Meetings.
Local Newspapers	Posters and press releases appeared in local papers throughout the year to promote the PPN and upcoming events.
Roadshow	In collaboration with Carlow County Development Partnership, Citizens Information, Carlow Volunteer Centre and Kilkenny Carlow Education Training Board, Carlow PPN visited 7 locations throughout the County to promote the PPN and its activities.
Training Programmes	2 training programmes were delivered in 2017 which helped to promote the PPN and build capacity of our members.
Branded Materials	Pens, trolley keyrings, car air fresheners and USB's were introduced in 2016 to raise awareness of Carlow PPN.
Outreach Worker	While working on developing our Strategic Plan 2018-2021 during the year, it became clear that extra resources were required in order to deliver on our Strategic Plan. In October 2017, a 15 hour Outreach Worker was employed whose role is to get out in to the community, meet our members and promote the PPN. Carlow PPN also employed a 15 hour Administrator in October 2017.

In addition, Carlow PPN worked with Carlow County Council in giving presentations on the PPN to various audiences such as elected members, LCDC etc.

Capacity Building and Training

One of the functions of Carlow PPN is to identify and support training in relevant areas for groups and representatives. Carlow PPN offered a bi-annual training programme in 2017 – Spring and Winter programmes.

The following topics were delivered during these training programmes: -

- Garda Vetting – Volunteer Centre Information
- Do you need volunteers for your community group
- Facebook for Community Groups
- How to create a poster for your community event
- Food Safety for Community Centres
- How to Protect Group Data
- How to create a Constitution for your Community Group
- Finance for non-financial people
- All things fundraisings
- Insurance solutions for PPN members
- How to communicate with your group

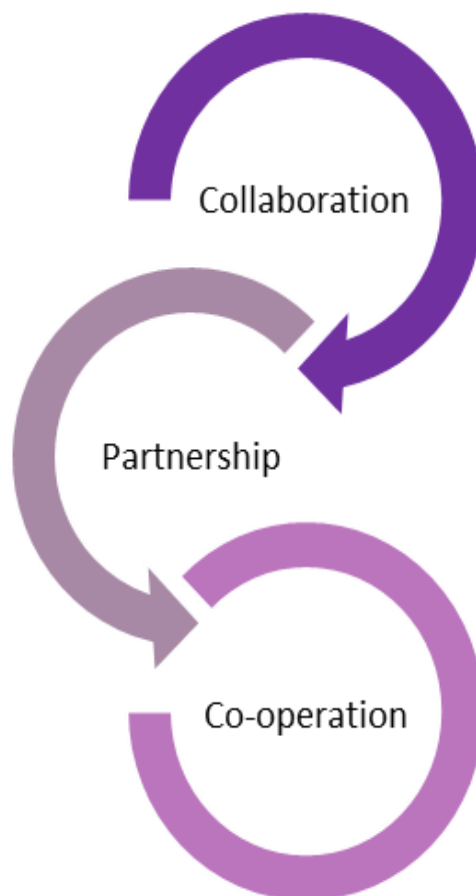


Working in Collaboration

As Carlow PPN has a small resource base, collaboration with other organisations/agencies adds huge value to PPN activities. Also, by working with other organisations/agencies with common objectives, more awareness is created.

The organisations/agencies Carlow PPN worked with in collaboration throughout 2017 were: -

- County Carlow Development Partnership
- Carlow Volunteer Centre
- Kilkenny/Carlow Education Training Board
- St. Catherine's Community Services Centre
- Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre
- Forward Steps Family Resource Centre
- Carlow County Council
- County Carlow Sports Partnership
- VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art and the George Bernard Shaw Theatre
- Social Justice Ireland



Events / Projects

Plenary Meetings

Carlow PPN held two Plenary Meetings in 2017. The Theme for our first Plenary on Tuesday, 27th June was 'Participation' where guest speakers presented on research carried out by students who explored creative regeneration and how design can be used to respond to a town a town planning challenge. This was followed by a workshop on participatory skills.

The theme for our second Plenary on Tuesday, 28th November was 'Engagement' where guest speakers presented on examples of good community consultation happening in County Carlow. This was followed by a presentation from The Wheel on Carlow PPN's plans to develop a 'Consultation Toolkit' for County Carlow.

Regional Meetings

Carlow PPN Secretariat Members and Representatives attend regional PPN meetings organised by Social Justice Ireland. Regional meetings took place in Carlow and Kilkenny. South East region PPN's also met in 2017 in Carlow.

National Meetings

National Co-ordinator meetings take place quarterly in Dublin and the Co-ordinator or PPN colleague attends all meetings. These meetings are an opportunity to network with all other PPN Co-ordinators.

Strategic Plan

Work began on our Strategic Plan for 2018 – 2021 in February 2017. Four facilitated sessions with Secretariat members took place throughout the course of the year to develop this Strategic Plan.





Plenary Meetings 2017





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