



Carlow Public Participation Network

2018 Annual Report

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Foreword from the Secretariat

It is with great pleasure that we present to you our 2018 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 2018.

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 2018 Carlow PPN launched their Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 to ensure these objectives were written in to all the work of the PPN. Work also continued on creating a Community Consultation Toolkit to try and ensure as much participation and engagement of members of Carlow PPN in all plans for the County of Carlow.

Eamonn Moore
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 and that the Council has a vital role to ensure that this happens effectively.

Carlow County Council's experience of working with Carlow PPN is a positive one. Carlow County Council appreciates the role and work of the PPN as the PPN structure enhances the ability of the Council to reach out to communities to hear their issues and to provide a platform for meaningful participation and engagement with organisations and service providers such as ourselves.

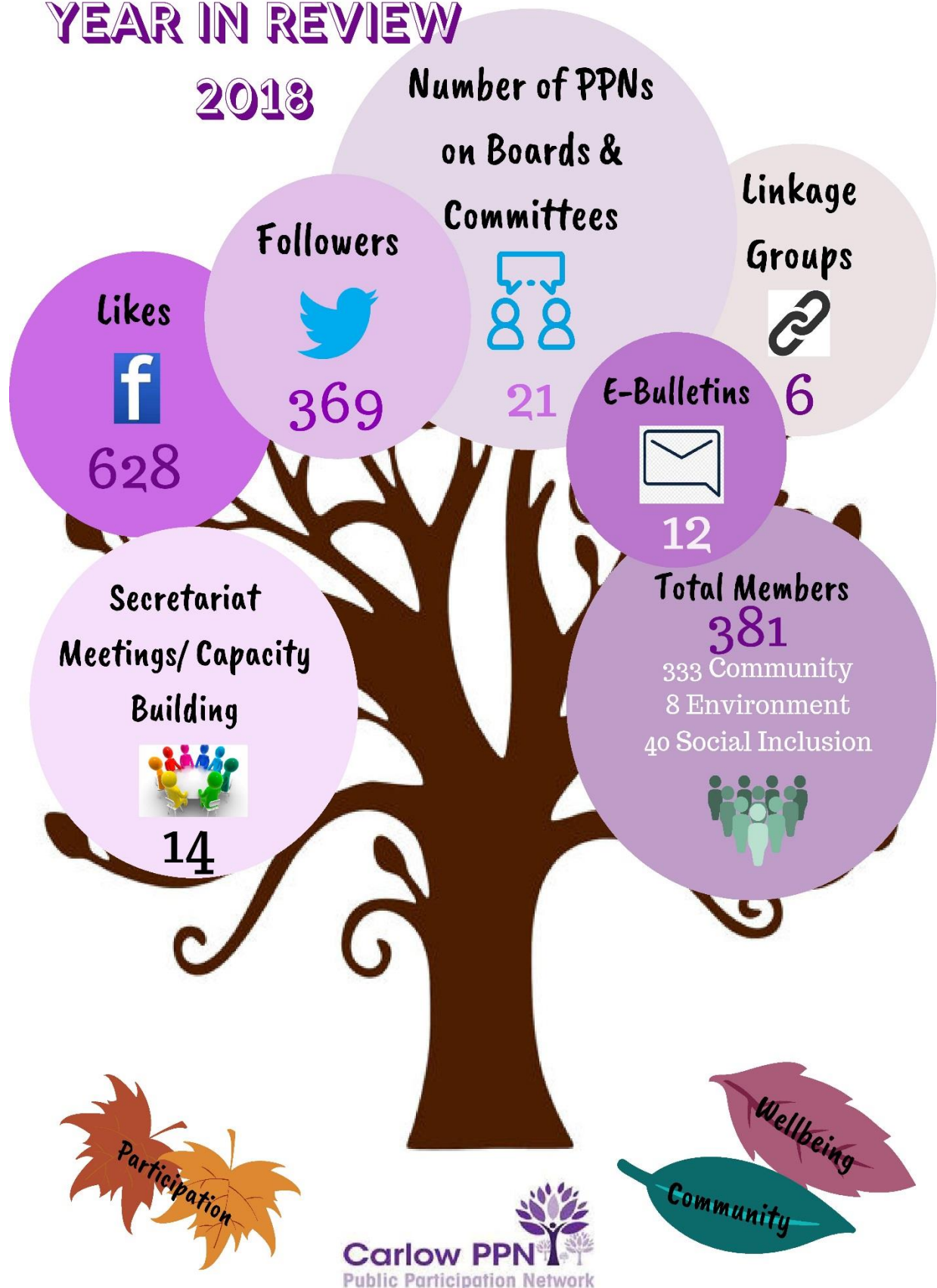
Carlow County Council is working and will continue to work with the PPN to establish and maintain this meaningful connection and to change how Carlow County Council consults with the public and communities.

Kathleen Holohan

CARLOW PPN

YEAR IN REVIEW

2018



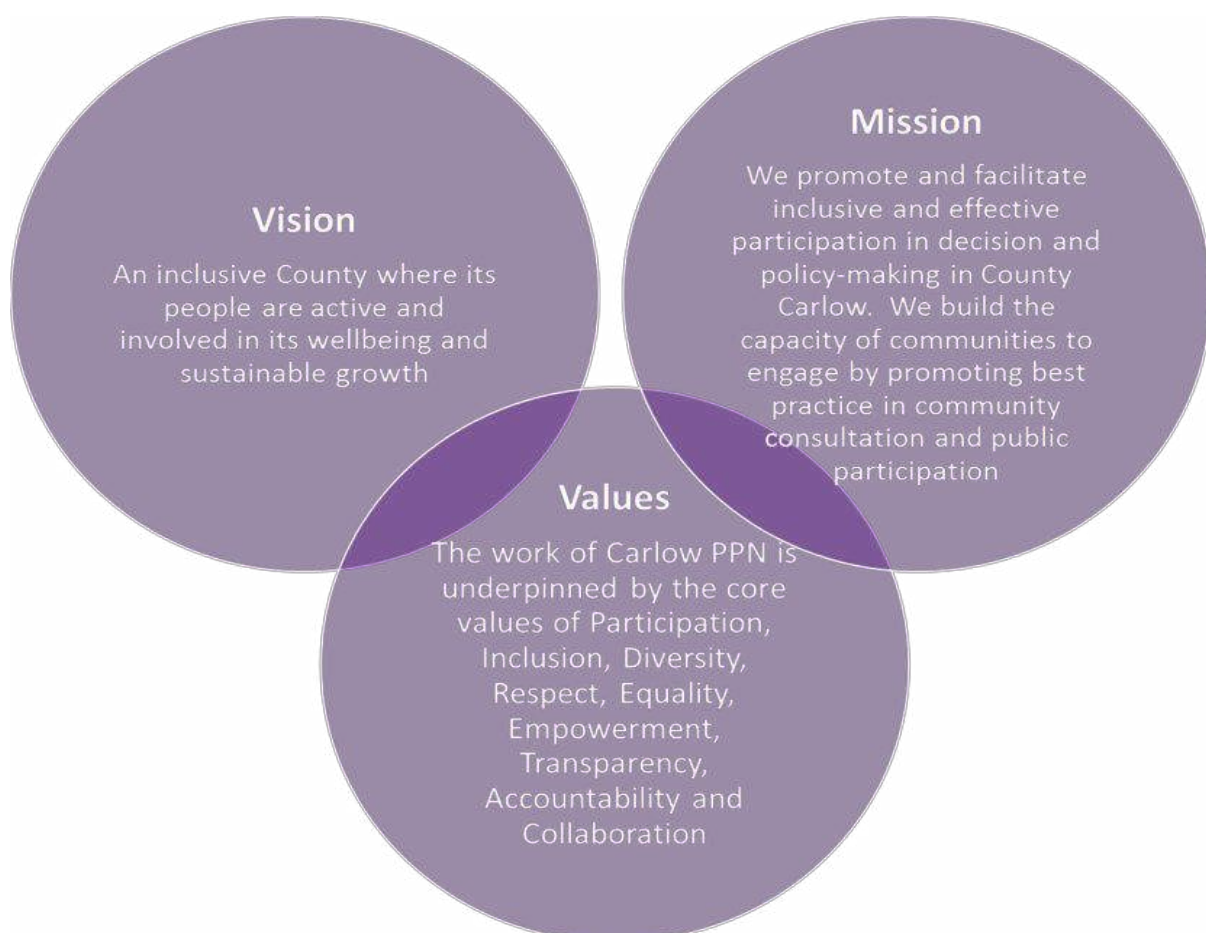
Introduction

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



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 to allow for the progression of work between Secretariat meetings and are as follows: -

- Support & Strategy Sub-Committee
- Finance Sub-Committee
- Council Liaison Sub-Committee

PPN Team

The PPN Co-ordinator reports to the Secretariat and supports the Secretariat and the Plenary in their work. In October 2017, Carlow PPN employed a 15 hour Administrator and 15 hour Outreach Officer on a 1 year contract. Both appointments were directly managed by the Secretariat.

Formal Agreements with Local Authority

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Carlow County Council and an annual Programme of Work along with a projected Cashflow Statement is agreed yearly with the Chief Executive of Carlow County Council. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) is also signed with the Community Department 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. However, in order to complete the Programme of Work for 2018 extra funding from Carlow County Council was allocated.

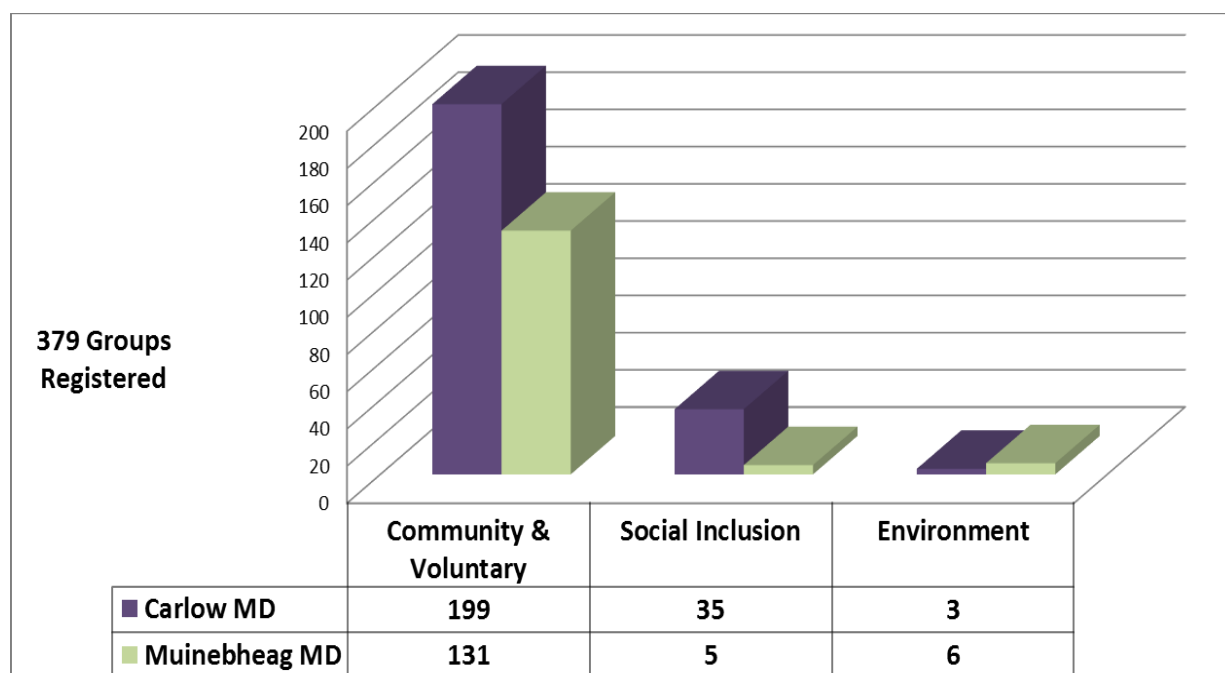
Total expenditure in 2018 was €91, 322.47 and is broken down as follows: -

2018	Actual Expenditure
Staff Salary (incl. PRSI)	€67,111.67
Expenses	€2,104.21
Rent / Hosting	€4,000.00
Postage / Telephone / Bank Charges	€361.82
Office Supplies / Stationary	€153.73
Insurance	€525.00
IT Support / Maintenance / Hosting	€399.75
Marketing and Promotion	€852.27
Projects / Activities / Events	€7,391.75
Room Hire / Refreshments	€1,349.87
Plenary Costs	€1,399.40
Training / Development	€5,673.00
Total Expenditure	€91,322.47

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 2018, 379 organisations/groups were members of Carlow PPN.



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.

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>

Representation and Decision Making

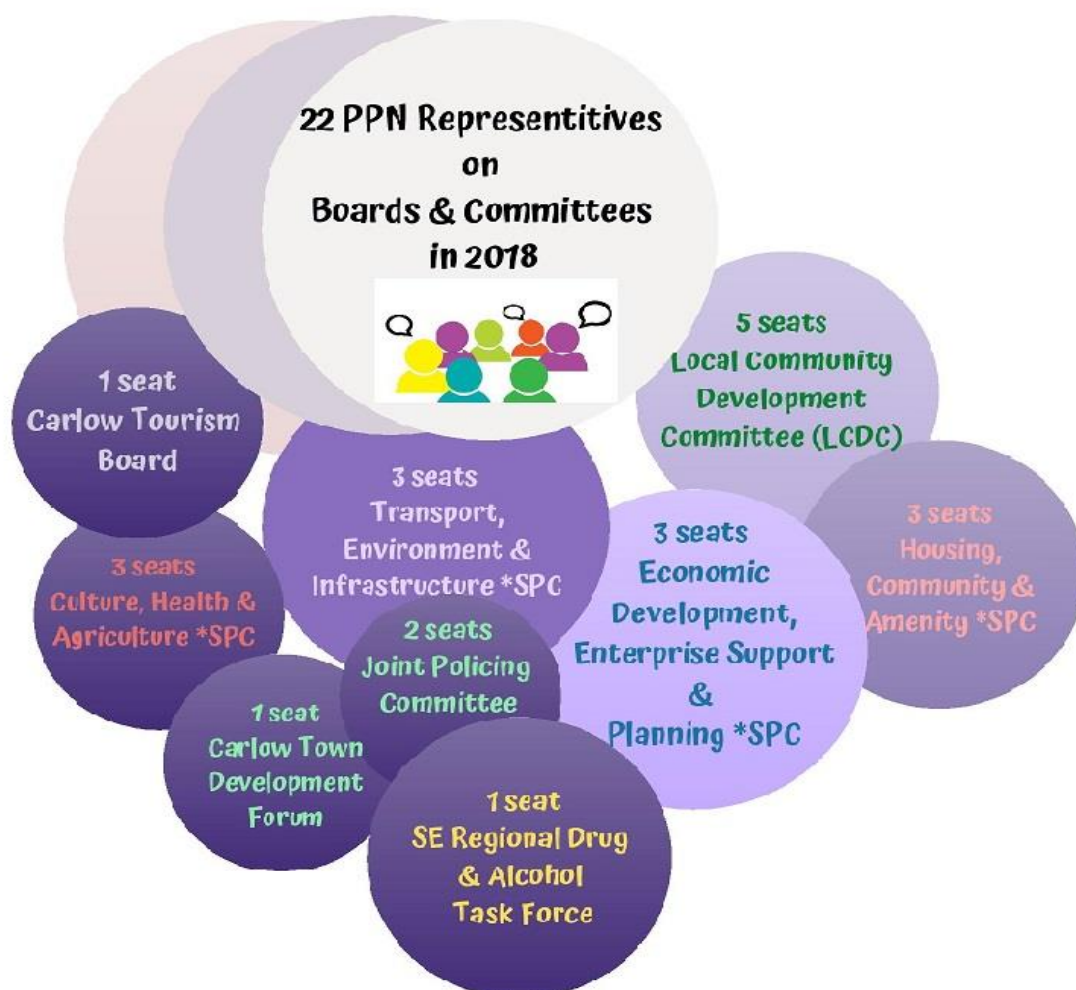
One of the core objectives of Carlow PPN is to facilitate the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion and community & voluntary colleges on decision making bodies. A variety of methodologies are used to ensure 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 2018, 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.

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.

E-Bulletin	In 2018 Carlow PPN issued 12 E-Bulletins by email to all members and was sent by post to those with no email address.
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Social Media Our Facebook and Twitter pages can be found @CarlowPPN. At the end of 2018, Carlow PPN had 463 likes on Facebook and 179 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.
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Local Newspapers Posters and press releases appeared in local papers throughout the year to promote the PPN and upcoming events.

Branded Materials	Pens, trolley keyrings, car air fresheners and USB's were introduced in 2016 to raise awareness of Carlow PPN.
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Carlow PPN Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021

In 2017, Carlow PPN began working on developing their Strategic Plan for the next three years. Four facilitated sessions with Secretariat members took place throughout the course of the year to develop this plan. Our Strategic Plan was launched on the 24th April at our first Plenary Meeting of 2018 and outlines our vision for the future of participative democracy in Carlow, as well as our goals and objectives in achieving this vision.

Goal 1

Policy and Decision Influencing - be a key decision and policy influencer on issues that shape Carlow communities

Objectives

- Facilitate public participation in local decision and policy-making
- Ensure the PPN Plenary is an informed, engaged and inclusive decision making structure
- Ensure robust, accountable, transparent structures and processes underpinning the PPN

Goal 2

Membership - build a vibrant, active and inclusive membership

Objectives

- Strengthen the PPN by promoting it as a representative voice for local communities in County Carlow
- Encourage and build members capacity to influence policy and to engage effectively in public participation
- Be an information resource on community engagement and public participation in Carlow

Goal 3

Partnership - build strong, effective working partnerships with all stakeholders

Objectives

- Work in partnership with Carlow County Council and other decision making bodies to foster meaningful community engagement and public participation
- Collaborate with community stakeholders to build cohesive approaches to engagement and public participation
- Support national, regional and local initiatives which promote active citizenship

Goal 4

Organisational Effectiveness - be an effective PPN working to best practice standards

Objectives

- Ensure the ongoing professional development and well-being of PPN staff
- Ensure compliance with governance, legislative and national budgetary requirements
- Develop procedures which capture the impact and effectiveness of the PPN's role and activities

Community Consultation Toolkit

In 2017, Carlow PPN began working on developing a 'Community Consultation Toolkit' for County Carlow and engaged The Wheel to help carry out this piece of work. Carlow PPN wanted to identify and help bridge the gap between current practice and best practice in community consultation and engagement in County Carlow. Various Focus Group Meetings were held with PPN members, New Communities, Traveller Health Workers, members of Comhairle Na Nog, Carlow County Council Management and Elected Members. Information was also gathered through a survey. Further meetings on the draft Toolkit also took place.



Carlow PPN

Community Consultation Toolkit



**A Guide for Good Consultation
with Communities in Carlow**

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 several training and capacity building workshops for members in 2018.

The following topics were delivered during these training programmes: -

- Good Governance for non-profit organisations
- The Charities Act 2009
- Basic Introduction to GDPR
- Social Media
 - Selecting and managing platforms – locally focused social media on how to build a local audience and easy but effective content plan
 - Developing local content – developing local stories, using photos effectively and making great mobile videos

Social Media training was delivered in five locations throughout the County – Bagenalstown, Ballon, Borris, Carlow Town and Tullow.

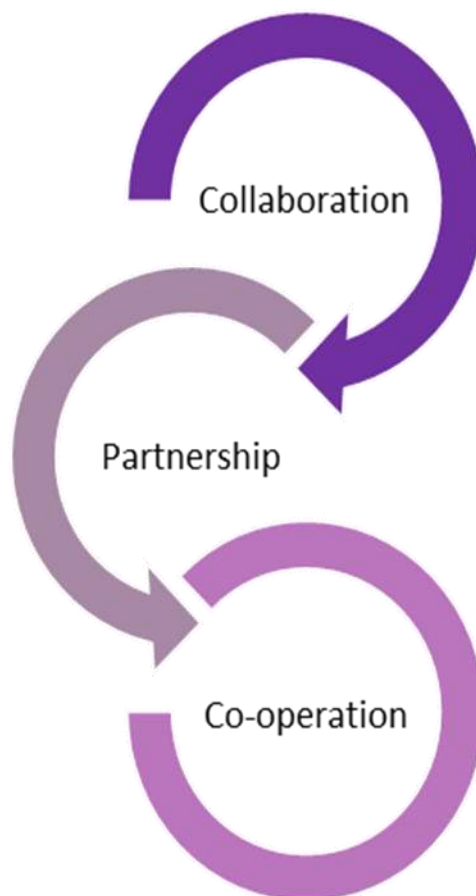


Working in Collaboration

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 2018 were: -

- County Carlow Development Partnership
- Carlow Volunteer Centre
- St. Catherine's Community Services Centre
- Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre
- Forward Steps Family Resource Centre
- BEAM Services Centre Ltd.
- Cairdeas Centre
- Carlow County Council
- County Carlow Sports Partnership
- Comhairle Na Nog
- Social Justice Ireland



Events / Projects

Plenary Meetings

Carlow PPN held two Plenary Meetings in 2018. The Theme for our first Plenary on Tuesday, 24th April was 'Funding and Resources'. The evening offered groups the opportunity to find out what funding and resources were available to them during an expo and a presentation from the Social Innovation Fund.

The theme for our second Plenary on Thursday, 29th November was 'Access' where Carlow PPN hosted an expo on access to services such as mental health, physical and intellectual disability, visual and hearing impairment and education. This was followed by a presentation from CCUAM – County Carlow Universal Access Movement, a new movement set up by Carlow PPN in partnership with SICAP. We also had a presentation from the South-East Suicide Resource Office on a new Wellbeing Champions Programme

Regional Meetings

South East PPN's came together in 2018 to form a South-East Network where Co-ordinators meet every quarter to discuss mutual issues.

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.

National Conference

The 2018 National Conference took place on the 11th and 12th October in Athlone where Carlow PPN was afforded the opportunity to present the Community Consultation Toolkit under best practice. The presentation was very well received.



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