



**Submission to the Public Consultation on
Project Carlow 2040 –
Development of Carlow Town Centre**

By

Carlow Public Participation Network

*Carlow PPN
Town Hall
Centaur Street*

*Tel: 059/9172495
Email: carlowppn@carlowcoco.ie*

Introduction

Carlow Public Participation Network (PPN) was established in October 2014 under the Directive of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and in accordance with legislation in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (Section 46).

The PPN is an independent organisation and is a framework for public engagement and participation with sustainability and wellbeing at its core. The aim of this structure is to facilitate and enable public organisations operating within the wider community to articulate and give voice to a diverse range of views, issues and interests within the local government system.

Currently there are 435 community groups across the three colleges - community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental affiliated to Carlow PPN. These groups are hugely diverse in nature. Representatives are elected to boards/committees across the County from the PPN membership to represent the community voice and give up their time voluntarily. The PPN has for the first time given these local community volunteers a say in local decision making that directly affects them and their communities.

Carlow PPN and Carlow County Council

The PPN is the main channel through which Carlow County Council informs the community of the work it carries out. It is essential that any policies / decisions affecting the community be communicated through the PPN to ensure voices are being heard.

As part of the reform of local government, the report from the Working Group on Citizenship Engagement stated: *'the approaches to engage citizens in local authority policy formulation and service design must go beyond the range of communication, consultation and citizen participation mechanisms used in the past.'*

In this regard when Carlow County Council are undertaking any policy changes and are planning a consultative period, it is proposed that Carlow PPN be informed at the earliest possible stage so that information can be disseminated to the appropriate sector etc. Also, that information is communicated in clear and accessible language – 'plain English', see *Appendix I*.

Community Consultation

Carlow PPN welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on Project Carlow 2040 – Development of Carlow Town Centre.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the health and safety of our members, a face-to-face meeting did not take place. Alternatively, Carlow PPN worked in partnership with Carlow County Council to carry out an online presentation/consultation meeting on the morning of Tuesday, 13th October. Members who could not attend the online presentation/consultation were asked to feed in by email.

The draft plan focuses on four pillars – Health & Wellbeing, Environment & Sustainability, Transport & Infrastructure and 4. These pillars can be easily married with the six pillars set out in Carlow PPN's Community Wellbeing Vision and from which Carlow PPN's submission is based.

- **Wellbeing Workshops**

In 2019, the PPN held Wellbeing Workshops throughout the County. Developing a Vision for Community Wellbeing means thinking about what we have and what we need to help each Municipal District of the county to be as great as it can be for us and for future generations. Our wellbeing is affected by many things; the economy, the environment, services etc. and the wellbeing of the community affects everyone within it. Under this programme, Carlow PPN looked at what wellbeing for a community involves under the following headings: -

- Environment and Sustainability
- Health (Physical and Mental)
- Work, Economy and Resources
- Social and Community Development
- Participation, Democracy and Good Governance
- Values, Culture and Meaning



Three workshops, one in each Municipal District, took place and all responses were documented.

- **Feedback from Municipal District of Carlow Wellbeing Workshop**

Set out below are the responses from the Municipal District of Carlow under the above headings. The full Vision is set out in *Appendix II*.

1. Health (physical and mental)

Medical

- Proper Primary Care Centre
- Respite support for full time carers
- After care for addiction services for Carlow town
- Medical treatment to be provided at local level not large hospitals
- Public accessible (24/7) defibrillators throughout Carlow Town
- Dementia specific services
- Day respite for individuals with dementia
- Support services for drug users and their families
- Quality accessible services – outreach – out of hours' services
- Medical care for young and old

Mental Health

- More and better mental health services, especially for young people
- Education on 'emotions' and 'feelings' from a young age
- Improved mental health CAMHS service (Child and Adult Mental Health Service)
- De-stigmatise mental health starting with early education
- Invest in frontline mental health services

Governance

- Appropriate anti-bullying procedures in schools, clubs and workplaces
- The need to look at policies around inclusion, participation and area boundaries e.g. Community Games and Special Olympics

Intergenerational Activities / Reduction in Isolation

- Supporting isolation – befriending / volunteer
- Initiative to link pre-school with nursing homes nearby (research already done as to benefits for both)
- Develop a 'helping hand' service for active retired people (teacher, lecturers, Gardaí) who can use their skills to help schools and communities
- Big brother initiative or a man's best friend initiative or a type of service for lonely individuals that will get them in to a community environment or action

Getting Active

- Recreational / Leisure facilities
- Encourage children to walk/cycle to school – walking train

Older Persons

- Cyber abuse of older people
- Safety security for older persons

Support for Diverse Groups

- Community Hub – mother and child – coffee mornings – seniors – afterschool's
- CCUAM – Access for the visually impaired on paths

Community Health Supports

- Services in Carlow for suicide prevention – closure of Talk it Over??
- Support people living with depression
- Support group (like Eist) for people with anxiety and depression
- Womens Shelter
- Set up and fund a social prescribing program in Carlow
- Supports through joining groups such as ICA for crafts, chat and community spirit

Awareness and Education

- Education around nutrition / healthy eating, organic local food, growing your own sustainable food
- Sexual health education in schools – regular workshops until they finish education
- Problem solving in schools – learn soft skills – bills, fixing a plug etc.
- Understanding of mental health issues
- Physical health – dietary requirements for healthy living
- Dementia awareness across the county to support dementia inclusion
- Education on awareness of mental health to reduce the stigma in this area
- Health promotion – prevention better than cure

- Free mindfulness courses
- Knowledge of services for communities – where to go?

Employment/ Enterprise Supports

- Working from home/ close to home – hot desks
- Social enterprises
- groups e.g. Inclusive GAA programmes

Support for Carers

- Support the carers
- More support for carers

2. Social and Community Development

Multi – cultural

- Community singing and dance to encourage social sharing - share in culture e.g. new communities and the travelling community

Transport

- Rapid bus link in built up areas

Infrastructure

- Improvement in traffic Management Plan
- Signage for public buildings e.g. hospital, town hall etc.
- Signage for housing estates

Housing

- Vary the size of houses in any new development
- Small living units for young and elderly
- More council housing
- Sustainable housing available to move on to

Supports for Older People

- Supported living areas for elderly and retired
- Return people (especially young families and older people) to town centre where there are services for all
- Community facilities for older people (bingo etc.)

Information

- Central hub for information about available services – live and relevant

Supports for Women

- Access to emergency housing including Womens Refuge

Consultation and Participation

- Every person is involved in identifying their own needs e.g. people with dementia
- Working with TD on the community

Community Activities and Services

- Social events for those with special needs in a regular setting with normal hours
- Arts Co-op for organisations to pool resources towards long term sustainability
- Evening and social activities in the area with public transport to and from
- Support for organisations exploring social enterprises – funding available and the encouragement to support the organisations to explore same
- Residents Associations

Supports for Youth

- A Youth Shed for young people on Tullow Road as a starter and link to Men's Shed
- Youth Cafes

Community Services

- More community centres that promote more social interaction e.g. Men's Shed, bingo etc.
- Recreational facilities – skate park, seating areas for elderly people
- Community Hub for the Tullow Road for elderly, young people and different nationalities
- Affordable rental space for rehearsals

Support for Community Groups

- Simple leadership groups
- More supports for groups
- Support for community centres and all the different voluntary groups (Tidy Towns, sports clubs, etc.)
- Support community groups, NGOs, insurance costs which are too high.
- Change structure of committee meetings
- Incentivise 3rd level students to help community groups
- *Incentivise volunteering by payment in kind

Diversity and Integration

- Community centres to actively promote cultural diversity regardless of age/ ability/ ethnicity/ gender
- Integration barriers
- More remote get togethers – using the Internet, video link-ups – needs education and good broadband
- Amalgamation of young and elderly
- Age-friendly towns and villages
- Universal access

3. Participation, Democracy and Participation

Community Participation in Local Government

- More community participation, where all local citizens need a bigger voice in the community and are believed by our local representatives
- Community Hub where people can access information and be supportive and engage in local government structures
- To have a Citizen Government (bottom up approach)
- A real seat at the table; not tokenism
- Better leadership from our representatives to develop our communities
- More devolved decision making where responsible debate can take place
- Children and young people having a voice and consulted on decisions affecting their future
- Public Forum for people to meet politicians and representatives to put forward issues
- Funding informed by the community ideas or a need, they need to be listened to – Participatory Budgeting
- Accessibility to information and buildings
- Clear communication- plain English and no acronyms
- More transparency and accountability in how the government works

Community Group Governance and Supports

- Access to funding and expertise on this within the wider community
- Practical assistance with administration and organisation of volunteer groups
- Information on grants and finding coming down from Government in good time to allow people to apply (time constraints)
- Re-evaluate the “money has to be spent” to get a grant method as many groups don’t have the money
- Code of governance simpler for groups – no joined up thinking
- Informal gathering spaces

4. Economy and Resources

Transport

- Bus service into housing estates badly needed
- Extra train/rail service from Dublin to Waterford
- Regular town bus service (National Transport Authority)
- Inter-town transport
- No transport for those commuting to work in Tullow

Support for Community Activities

- Community hub for access to more services in one place
- A one-stop-shop for voluntary groups on insurance and new regulations e.g. GDPR
- Increased access to computers in accessible locations as well as increased resources in the libraries

Insurance

- Prevent insurance premium hikes in prices leading to businesses closing
- Insurance needs as a whole

Supports for Business

- Exemption on rates for new business (2-3 years)
- To promote businesses to stay in the town area
- Transparency on the funding available to start ups and existing businesses to encourage business retention

Planning and Policy

- Sustainable development or redevelopment of vacant shops/ business parks
- Promote environmental innovation through grant funding with sustainability a requirement
- Pedestrianisation

Infrastructure

- Better broadband for all areas in Carlow
- Affordable broadband; it is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity
- Broadband network in rural areas of the County to create more:
 - Business opportunities
 - Better and more diverse education
 - More support for enterprises

Security

- Garda funding increased to get more Gardaí on the streets

Business Ethos

- Pride of place in existing organisations supporting what is already there and encouraging the growth of same
- Promote good practice ethos within organisations e.g. Shaws, Penneys, etc.
- Organised and effective use of retired worker's skills and expertise

Training & Experience Supports

- More training and re-training for unemployed and those with other needs
- More upskilling for long-term stay at home parents
- Preparation for all types of jobs
- Future-focused innovation in training
- Affordable and accessible Information Technology classes for all ages
- Appropriate intermediate computer training
- University status for the Institute of Technology
- More craft training and apprenticeships
- Establish a craft centre
- Fuller local employment in general
- Work experience given as a regular process to unemployed
- More funding given as an incentive to do courses to get back to work; not given with one hand and taken back with the other

Different Models for Business

- Promote job diversity; social enterprise, private business, community and voluntary
- Encourage social enterprises within communities; making communities more self-sufficient and self-reliant
- Promote and enable pop-up shops for both voluntary groups and newly formed small companies
- Pop-up craft gallery or other uses in vacant spaces

Support for Creative Business Opportunities

- Social enterprise hubs in each municipality to aid, encourage, highlight, support, educate and provide space for social enterprise
- Micro loans
- Re-invention of the “high street” for the 21st century to create jobs and sense of community
- Re-establish artisan bakeries in the area
- Encourage and inform people about alternatives to traditional agricultural systems, e.g. co-operatives, community supported agriculture

Infrastructure

- Better broadband so people can work from home, more flexible working rotas, less driving as a result

Education

- Presentation de la Salle have applied for funding to establish metalwork classes to satisfy the demands for apprenticeships locally

5. Values, Culture and Meaning

Respectful, Inclusive and Connected Communities

- More respect and inclusion of our older generations
- Membership of “groups” committees to be representative of the diverse community base
- Develop a culture of respect for all
- Festivals to celebrate all cultures
- Consultation and communication from social viewpoint
- Social, inclusive and neighbourly community

Heritage

- Local heritage tuition in schools – local history and stories
- Preservation of our heritage - Protect our castles, houses and fairy forts
- More heritage tours, open bus tours, walking tours
- Address the rural / town divide (Carlow town) – should reflect the County as a whole; agriculture, beauty, rivers, etc.
- More development of Irish language and grants to learn
- Music, art, dance supports for all cultures

Varied Social Engagement and Supports

- Funded “mindful” summer camps for children, youth and adults
- More social amenities
- Volunteering community group for children and young people to give back to the community
- Develop summer jobs related to culture for young people
- ICA, Men’s Shed & other groups that give huge support to people’s mental health

Expertise

- The County Council to employ a Heritage Officer
- Appoint a County architect (rather than have only planning)

Food

- Establish international farmers’ / food markets
- Develop local foods

6. Environment and Sustainability

Council Responsibility for Bio-Diversity

- Council should consult bio-diversity plans
- Implement the Carlow Bio-Diversity Strategy in conjunction with the Carlow Regeneration Plan
- Accountability of the officials for our future

The 3 ‘R’s

- Make Carlow the first plastic waste free town
- Encourage people to shop in charity shops
- Have more accessible recycling centres
- Have more litter pickers & bin facilities (dog litter)?
- Education around proper segregation of waste

Minding Nature

- Encourage more beekeeping & beekeeping clubs
- Have more public allotments
- Encourage more environmentally friendly planting (less annuals) and organic farming
- Encourage bio-diversity awards for more appropriate gardening methods i.e. roads, houses, schools and streets etc.
- Stop using weed killer
- Irish wildflower on common ground and / or waste ground
- Develop Swift (bird) nest boxes in town to replace old buildings that have been replaced by new builds
- Cap the amount of forestry and encourage more broadleaf woodland. We are lucky to be surrounded by good agricultural land. Can we help to protect that?
- Proper protection of our natural habitats, water systems, biodiversity, woodlands, hedgerows, wetlands

Water

- Sustainability of water supply
- Mapping of boreholes

Support for Heritage

- County Carlow would like their own Heritage Officer
- International, National and Regional local and zero designation of buildings for listings (protection)
- Work with support organisations e.g. Carlow Tourism to enable communities to reclaim local heritage sites, customs, festivals and traditions

Energy/ Carbon Free

- Extend the use of alternative energy concepts – geothermal (extremely good community projects)
- Have smoke-free fuel, coal & turf needs to be limited
- Make Carlow carbon-free
- Community grant scheme for renewable energy, in private homes
- Promote the 'Paris Accord'
- Build houses in relation to energy saving standards

Eco-Tourism

- Develop an Eco-Tourist Trail. Link to green way to Gardens to Heritage Sites

Awareness/Education

- More workshops / training given to local community groups to learn about conserve, project & restore
- Community outreach to educate people in everyday training support
- More promotion for environmental issues
- Promote green schools

Transport

- Public & electric transport improvement – more electric car charge points
- Safe cycling lanes for kids & adults
- Education around electric vehicles including benefits (quitter)/hazards
- Rural transport needs to be addressed

Built Environment

- Innovation in affordable housing; create pilot housing schemes e.g. wooden houses, kit houses, straw bales, with the aim to create affordable, state of the art, environmentally friendly housing

Education and Action

- More green flags in the County - as young people are committed, they should be encouraged to continue with environmental projects as they get older

Items raised and discussed at Meeting

Items raised at the meeting included: -

- Ensuring the pillar of Health & Wellbeing was to the forefront of the plan
- Ensuring the Irish language is included in signage across the town
- Accessibility of the town – ensuring that universal access is considered at every stage of design which will in turn attract more tourism for our town and county
- The need for an Adult Changing Facility in the town – this again could add to tourism numbers visiting our town and county
- Essential to work with organisations such as County Carlow Universal Access Movement (CCUAM) on an ongoing basis throughout the development of this project

Sustainable Development Goals

The Vision for Community Wellbeing was also matched to the Sustainable Development Goals. It is also Carlow PPN's proposal that the Project Carlow 2040 Plan take the Sustainable Development Goals into consideration a real, relevant and measurable way. Everyone has a role to play in achieving these goals locally, regionally, nationally and globally. If all objectives / actions are measured against the goals, we can see real progress in achieving these.

Appendix III looks at the Sustainable Development Goals and how local authority plans are well placed to integrate the SDGs in to action at local level.

Conclusion

It is essential that our communities be listened to for the County to thrive. When people are heard, they not only feel valued which increases well-being and leads to a better quality of life, they also take ownership. Quality of life should be paramount for all citizens.

Carlow PPN looks forward to continually working with Carlow County Council to make our county a better place to live.

Appendix I

Engaging with Carlow PPN.....for Carlow County Council Staff

How we can help you:

1. A monthly E-Bulletin is emailed/posted to all our members at the beginning of every month. Inclusion of your information will ensure you get a broad reach and an engaged target audience. Information should be relevant to communities, emailed the last week of every month and should be in plain English.
2. Our social media profile is growing – particularly our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/CarlowPPN/> or [@CarlowPPN](https://twitter.com/CarlowPPN)). A great way to promote what you are in real time.
3. Use our existing connection and relationship with community groups to set up information meetings, seminars etc. in collaboration with Carlow PPN or use Carlow PPN to publicise your meetings and events.
4. Work with your PPN to ‘inclusion proof’ events or information pieces. Get simple advice about how to improve the way you engage with the community, especially the hardest to reach sectors and how you can make your overall message more accessible and engaging.
5. Use the collective gatherings at our Plenary meetings to promote or exhibit your work.
6. Send information updates to be provided to members at our Plenary meetings.

Guidelines to consider when providing information to Carlow PPN

Consultations	Information/Events	Grants/Funding/Supports
• What is the consultation about? – a short description works best • How can people feedback? Think about methods and avoid a single method e.g. online only. • Is there sufficient time? Groups may only meet monthly. Does the timing allow for considered opinion? • Is there an information session or meeting to discuss where people can get more information? • Provide a relevant picture/graphic for use on social media to increase engagement	• Provide supporting documentation if needed – provide links/soft copy and hard copy for those without email • Is there a need to RSVP and if so to whom? • Is there a contact for more information if required? • Is there a Facebook event or Eventbrite registration?	• A short description of what the grant/funding is and who can apply • What is the closing date and where to find an application form? • How are applications accepted i.e. online/hard copy or both and where to send them? • Are there examples of projects of previous projects'/awards to assist applicants? • Are there any information sessions being held or is there a contact for further information?

Remember you can always checkout Carlow PPN's Community Consultation Toolkit for further information on how to capture your audience's attention – [Community Consultation Toolkit](#)

Appendix II

County Carlow Community Wellbeing Vision

In the County of Carlow, we are a diverse community, that celebrates all our rich heritage and where all people are valued and supported to live healthy and fulfilled lives. All our citizens are well-informed and engage actively in their communities and in decision-making that affects them. We have well-planned facilities, infrastructure and services that facilitate us to be leaders in sustainability and best practice within our thriving economy and vibrant local communities.

Environment and Sustainability

Everyone in the County of Carlow is enabled to live sustainably. We are leaders in actively caring for our environment and make wise use of all our assets; natural or made.

- All our citizens have access to continuous education and appropriate upskilling that supports sustainable living.
- Agencies and individuals are committed to protecting our biodiversity, water and air, ensuring we can enjoy these now and into the future.
- Our built environment is well-planned and constructed and designed to be sustainable. It has minimum impact on the natural environment, and we make creative use of our built and natural heritage, waterways and urban spaces.
- We are conscious consumers that minimise waste production at all points in production and consumption. We actively repair and reuse goods and materials and recycle wherever possible using accessible, up to date and efficient facilities.
- Sustainable transport options both public and private are available and accessible.

Health (mental and physical)

We are well-informed and educated citizens who are able to actively support our own good health. We have a range of community activities and services involving all generations that protect the vulnerable, prevent isolation and support the mental and physical health of all community members. We have seamless provision of excellent and accountable mental and physical health services across the County.

- We have good provision of high-quality, immediately accessible services to address both mental and physical health needs. All initiatives that support our health are well co-ordinated.
- There is easily available information on health services and supports. Appropriate education on all aspects of mental and physical health and healthy living is provided to all citizens in the County, thereby increasing awareness and reducing stigma.
- Widespread recreational and social activities such as sports and crafts, throughout the County, supports good mental and physical health of individuals and strong, cohesive communities

Social and Community Development

In the County of Carlow all people are valued and supported. We share our diverse cultures and build strong relationships throughout our communities. There is well-planned infrastructure, housing and community facilities that meet the needs of all citizens. Community services, supports and activities are in place that enable us all to live fulfilled, secure and valuable lives.

- We have a sustainable housing plan that includes flexible and creative measures to meet all housing needs.
- Our vibrant community has access to a variety of spaces that can accommodate multiple needs.
- Citizens are educated and empowered to take leadership roles and actively participate.

Participation, Democracy and Good Governance

In the County of Carlow there is meaningful participation in civic society across all age ranges where transparency and accountability are held in high regard. Citizens are properly informed and understand the structures and processes of government and actively engage in these. Proactive local government communicates and engages with communities and demonstrates that it prioritises their wishes and wellbeing. Resources and supports are available for the effective operation and administration of community groups.

- There are mechanisms in place to ensure the voices of all groups in our community are included in decision-making that affects them.
- Relevant best practice is adopted in all agencies, organisations and voluntary groups.

Values, Culture and Meaning

The County of Carlow is a respectful and inclusive community. We protect and celebrate our historical and multi-cultural heritage. We value and enjoy our built and natural heritage. We thrive as a community rich in arts, local history and culture. All our citizens are empowered and enabled to participate fully in the community.

- We understand the needs of our citizens and have social amenities and activities that support all groups within our communities and their interaction and integration. These are accessible to all.
- The positive impact of our diverse cultures is recognised, valued and supported.
- We have skills and expertise available and accessible to communities and agencies.

Economy and Resources

In the County of Carlow, we have creative models and supports for enterprise and workers. We have sustainable infrastructure that meets the needs of businesses, workers and the community. Flexible,

future-focused training is available for all. Our businesses adopt the highest ethical standards and best practice in all aspects of operation.

- Innovative planning delivers sustainable development; supporting a wide variety of commercial enterprises to include indigenous and social enterprises.
- Our transport and communication infrastructure meet the needs of all.
- Comprehensive business supports are available and fully utilised to energise our economy. Businesses operate in a secure and healthy environment.
- We embrace training from a diverse range of skill sources and institutions which is available to all.

Appendix III

The SDGs and Local Government

Ireland's National Implementation Plan for the SDGs identifies the crucial role that Local Authorities must play in translating the SDGs into practical action at local level. It identifies the Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and the Strategic Committees (SPCs) as well as local plans as being especially well placed to integrate the SDGs into their activities. Social Justice Ireland in collaboration with the Irish Environmental Network, World Vision Ireland and ECO- UNESCO have set out a series of proposals for Local Authorities covering all 17 SDGS (see below). Carlow PPN supports these proposals and encourages Carlow County Council to consider and implement them. The full policy briefing can be found on the Social Justice Ireland website here: <https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/sdgs-and-local-authorities-creating-sustainable-communities>