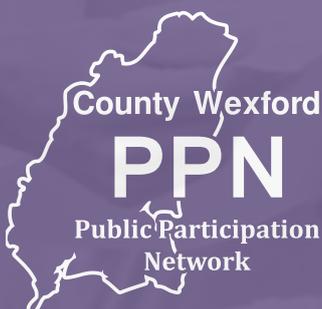


Wexford Public Participation Network Annual Report 2017



Wexford Public Participation Network (PPN) is a network of not-for-profit volunteer-led groups spread across County Wexford. Groups include community & voluntary, environmental, and social inclusion groups active within the county.

Informing – Developing – Representing

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01.

Introduction

Wexford Public Participation Network (PPN) is a network of not-for-profit volunteer-led groups spread across Co Wexford. Groups include community & voluntary, environmental, & social inclusion groups active within the county.

Public Participation Networks (PPN) were established by the Irish Government under the Local Government (Reform) Act 2014 to be the main link through which the Local Authority connects with these groups. This law followed the 2013 report of the Working Group on the Citizen Engagement with Local Government, which was chaired by Dr Sean Healy of Social Justice Ireland.



The Working Group's report recommended more input by citizens into decision making at local government level. It recommended that PPNs should be set up in each Local Authority area to allow the public to take an active role in relevant committees of the Local Authority.

Outside of the links with the Local Authority the PPN should be the 'go to' organisation for all bodies in the county who wish to benefit from community and voluntary expertise in the course of policy development.

Having PPN representation on these Boards or Committees enables the concerns and experiences of the community to be incorporated at an early stage of policy development, leading to more positive outcomes. It also supports the monitoring and evaluation of existing policies.

Wexford PPN is run by a volunteer committee, the Secretariat, elected by the membership whose responsibility is to oversee the development of the network. Wexford PPN has one full-time member of staff, the PPN Support Officer (SO), who assists the Secretariat in the day-to-day running of the PPN and in its development.

Government Guidelines outline three main objectives for PPNs:

Informing

- Provide information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary sector and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received.

Developing

- 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.

Representing

- 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.

These Government Guidelines also specify a number of principles and values that PPNs are expected to operate by; they should be inclusive, participatory, independent, valuing of diversity, transparent, and accountable.

As we hope this report demonstrates, 2017 was a busy year for Wexford PPN.



02.

PPN Membership

To become a member of Wexford Public Participation Network a group must meet the following membership criteria;

- Be active with a postal address in County Wexford
- Operate on a not-for profit basis
- Are volunteer led – organisations may have paid staff, but must be under voluntary control
- Are independent i.e. not a sub-committee or subgroup of another organisation
- Have at least 5 members and are open to new members
- Have an appropriate governance structure e.g. a constitution / set of rules / financial procedures
- Meet regularly
- In existence for at least six months
- Are non-party political

Our Growing Membership

At the end of 2017 Wexford PPN had 316 Member Groups. This number represented growth on 2016 levels of over 10%.

Total Number of Groups	2016	2017
Community and Voluntary	216	239
Environment	8	8
Social Inclusion	62	69
Total	286	316

Members are required to re-register annually in October each year, with those who re-register by 31st October each year having voting rights in the membership year (Nov-Oct). Therefore the 316 member groups assures an up to date active register of PPN Members in Wexford.

At the end of 2017 Wexford PPN had 316 Member Groups. This number represented growth on 2016 levels of over 10%

Main Cause of Group	No.
Community Development.....	59
Sports/Outdoor Activities.....	37
Arts, Culture & Media.....	30
Older People/Active Retired.....	25
Youth.....	17
Women’s Groups.....	16
Environment & Conservation.....	15
Children.....	15
Community Centre.....	15
Residents Associations.....	11
Men’s Groups.....	10
Social Inclusion.....	9
Minority Groups.....	8
Heritage/Museums/Galleries.....	8
Families/Parenting.....	7
Crime/Safety.....	6
Intellectual/Learning Disability.....	5

Groups at registration are asked to identify the main cause of their group. In 2017 the above list was the mix of causes represented by Wexford PPN.

All other causes were below 5 mentions each.

03.

Communications

The 2016 Annual Report on PPNs, commissioned by the National PPN Advisory Group, recognised the lack of awareness and understanding of PPNs across the country.

This lack of understanding and awareness was evident in Wexford also. Therefore, as part of the Wexford PPN Workplan for 2017 a key focus was on increasing awareness and understanding of Wexford PPN. A number of initiatives were put in place to achieve this objective.



These initiatives included;

- Development of a dedicated Wexford PPN website – this was completed mid 2017 and is now the go-to source of information.
- Commissioning of a Wexford PPN Animation. This three minute explanation of PPNs, their functions and structures, was commissioned to provide a short clear overview for both members and potential members.
- Attendance at Summer Shows (Agricultural Shows) & other public events to increase general awareness of PPNs and Wexford PPN specifically. Stands were manned by PPN Volunteers. Agricultural shows included Gorey Show, Bannow & Rathangan Agricultural Show, & Adamstown Show, while other events included WEXPO, Enterprise Towns and Age Friendly Launch. Wexford PPN was also involved in planning and manning for the national PPN Stand at National Ploughing Championships.

Outside of these activities Wexford PPN engaged in the following communication activity:

Information Bulletins

To meet the 'Informing' function of Wexford PPN, 39 PPN Information Bulletins were issued to members in 2017. Information bulletins include a range of information including upcoming events, consultations, funding opportunities, training and group supports. These information bulletins were emailed to members and posted to members who did not have email.

PPN Newsletters

While the Information Bulletins keep members up to date with activities outside of Wexford PPN – PPN Newsletters provide details on the development and activity of Wexford PPN. Two newsletters were issued in 2017 and were available in both soft and hard copy versions to ensure accessibility to all members.

Social Media

Wexford PPN facebook page was set up in 2017 and had 382 likes on 31st December 2017. This page is key for keeping members up to date with activity as we become aware of it. Our facebook account automatically feeds to a Twitter account for Wexford PPN also.

Promotional Material

Wexford PPN developed a range of promotional material in 2017, including branded pens, water bottles, mugs, diaries, post-its, and bags. Pull up banners and signage for use at meetings and events was also purchased to grow and develop the Wexford PPN brand.

Membership Stickers

When groups Registered/Re-registered Wexford PPN provided a 2017/18 membership sticker for them to display on their premises, if they have one. Again this was in an effort to increase awareness of Wexford PPN.

Support Signposts

Wexford PPN produced a 'Supports Signposts' leaflet for PPN Members to highlight funding streams available and organisations of interest. This publication details of a range of funding providers which could be of benefit to members.

Wexford PPN developed a range of promotional material in 2017, including branded pens, water bottles, mugs, diaries, post-its, and bags.

04. Capacity Building

Volunteer led organisations face many challenges as they work to enhance their communities. One of the roles of Wexford PPN is to support them to achieve their objectives, both within their own areas and within PPN. This can include formal training, networking, mentoring, conferences, seminars etc. on topics of interest.

Wexford PPN conducted 15 free training sessions for members in 2017. These sessions included the following;

- Garda Vetting
- Accounts for your Community Group
- Facebook for your Community Group
- Basic First Aid
- General Data Protection Regulation
- Introduction to the Governance Code
- Volunteer Management
- Webinars from The Wheel on Governance Code, Charity Regulation, & Budget 2018

Wexford PPN also supported Members to attend the following conferences on behalf of Wexford PPN;

- Respond Conference Waterford
- Community Connect Conference Waterford
- nZeb Conference Wexford

National and regional networking efforts were also undertaken by Wexford PPN in order to further develop Wexford PPN and its members through shared learning. These included;

- PPN SO attendance at National PPN Conference
- PPN Rep attendance at Regional Meetings delivered by Social Justice Ireland
- PPN SO attendance at PPN Resource Workers Meetings
- South East Region PPN Workers meeting

Wexford PPN conducted 15 free training sessions for members in 2017. They included Garda Vetting, Basic First Aid and Volunteer Management.

05. Representation

Wexford PPN offers the community a seat and a voice at the decision-making tables within the county – allowing members to help in shaping important decision making. The PPN should be the “go to” organisation for all bodies in Wexford who wish to benefit from community and voluntary expertise at their table. In some cases representation also extends to regional committees.

Having PPN representation on a Board or Committee is a huge advantage. It enables the concerns and experiences of the community to be incorporated at an early stage of policy development, leading to more positive outcomes. It also supports the monitoring and evaluation of existing policies.

Wexford PPN has 25 Representatives on 10 Committees. These representations are broken down as follows:

21 PPN Representative seats across 7 different Wexford County Council Committees

Board or Committee	Total Number of Positions	Details
Local Community Development Voluntary Committee (LCDC)	6 Positions	3 Community & Voluntary 2 Social Inclusion 1 Environmental
Economic Development & Enterprise SPC	3 Positions	1 Community & Voluntary 1 Social Inclusion 1 Environmental
Housing, Community & Environment SPC	3 Positions	1 Community & Voluntary 1 Social Inclusion 1 Environmental
Transportation SPC	2 Positions	1 Community & Voluntary 1 Social Inclusion
Planning & Building Control SPC	1 Position	1 Environmental
Joint Policing Committee (JPC)	3 Positions	2 Community & Voluntary 1 Social Inclusion
Courtown/Riverchapel Local Policing Fora (LPF)	3 Positions	1 Community & Voluntary 2 Social Inclusion

Four PPN Representative seats across other non-Council Committees

Board or Committee	Total Number of Positions	Details
South East Fisheries Local Action Group (SE FLAG)	1 Position	Wider Coastal Community Rep
Sports Active – Wexford Local Sports Partnership	2 Positions	Community Representatives
South East Regional Drugs & Alcohol Taskforce (SERDATF)	1 Position	Community Representative



9 Men 14 Women

In 2017, 12 new representatives took office in these seats, mostly to fill existing vacancies at the end of 2016. Two representatives retired in 2017, and two vacancies remained at the end of 2017 to be filled in early 2018.

The gender mix of representatives was nine men and 14 women.

PPN Representatives agree to abide by the PPN Representative Charter developed in early 2017 & ratified at the PPN Plenary meeting on 27th February 2017.

The task of a PPN Representative is to be the link between a committee and the membership of the PPN. Representatives must engage in two way communication to and from the committee. This means that a Representative consults with members before attending meetings and feeds back afterwards. The job of a PPN Representative can be summarised in four key action areas: Listen, Discuss, Represent, & Feedback.

To assist PPN Reps in their task Wexford PPN offered a range of training and supports during 2017. These included;

- IT Upskilling to help Reps in corresponding with linkage groups members
- PPN Rep Induction Session for all PPN Reps organised in conjunction with Wexford County Council
- How to be an Effective PPN Rep training conducted with Social Justice Ireland



Wexford PPN conducted two Reps Roundtable events in 2017 – which were designed to act as a support network for Wexford PPN Reps and as a forum for development of the Rep role within Wexford County Council Committees and other committees. In December 2017 Wexford PPN Reps communicated with Wexford County Council to provide suggestions for development of the Rep experience within Council Committees.

PPN Reps were also encouraged to attend at Social Justice Ireland regional meetings to learn from peers in other PPNs.

With the development of Wexford PPN dedicated website PPN Rep Reports are provided for members online. A reporting template was also developed by Wexford PPN Reps in 2017.

Wexford PPN thanks all of our volunteer Reps for the work and commitment in 2017.

06.

Events for Members

Wexford PPN organised a range of events in 2017, offering members the opportunity to engage with the network. Outside of the Training Sessions for members and the Reps Roundtable events the following events were open to members for engagement in the network in 2017.

Plenary Meetings

Two plenary meetings were held in 2017 – one in February and a second in October. Plenary meetings are a gathering of all PPN Members across the county.

In addition to the membership meeting, the Plenary event in February offered members the opportunity to showcase their organisations, along with the opportunity to engage with other key organisations of interest who were invited to attend the showcase.

Municipal District Meetings

Eight Municipal District meetings were held in Wexford in 2017, two in each Municipal District. These District meetings offered members the opportunity to meet at a District level to network and discuss issues of concern. Municipal District meetings also offered the opportunity to meet with PPN Representatives in person.

Linkage Group Meetings

A Linkage Group is a collection of PPN member organisations who are stakeholders or have a particular interest or expertise in the issues being discussed at that Board or Committee. A meeting was held in March in Castlebridge and focused on the Local Community Development Committee and the South East FLAG. Officials from these committees attended offering members the opportunity to engage directly, while PPN Representatives were in attendance also.

Other Events

Towards a Socially Inclusive Wexford

In June 2017 Wexford PPN held an event in Enniscorthy to bring together those interested in Social Inclusion. This event 'Towards a Socially Inclusive Wexford' was open to all members. The event aimed to introduce the PPN Social Inclusion Reps, provide an opportunity to network with others interested in Social Inclusion, and to discuss community approaches & share solutions.

Wexford PPN collaborated with Social Justice Ireland to bring a Seminar and Discussion to Wexford. This session was 'Building a Better and more Equal Ireland' and was presented by Dr Seán Healy, Director, Social Justice Ireland.

07.

Collaboration



Wexford PPN aims to collaborate with other agencies and organisations at work in County Wexford.

This collaboration is evident in our information sharing to other organisations. Wexford PPN sends copies of the Information Bulletin to Wexford County Council Community Department, Wexford Local Development and Waterford Wexford Education Training Board (WWETB). Wexford PPN also shares information to the membership for these and other agencies on request.

Wexford PPN also work to increase the awareness and understanding of key organisations among our membership. In 2017 Comhairle na nOg, WWETB Community Education, Local Link Wexford & Future Proof Wexford all presented at Wexford PPN Municipal District meetings to increase awareness and understanding of these organisations.

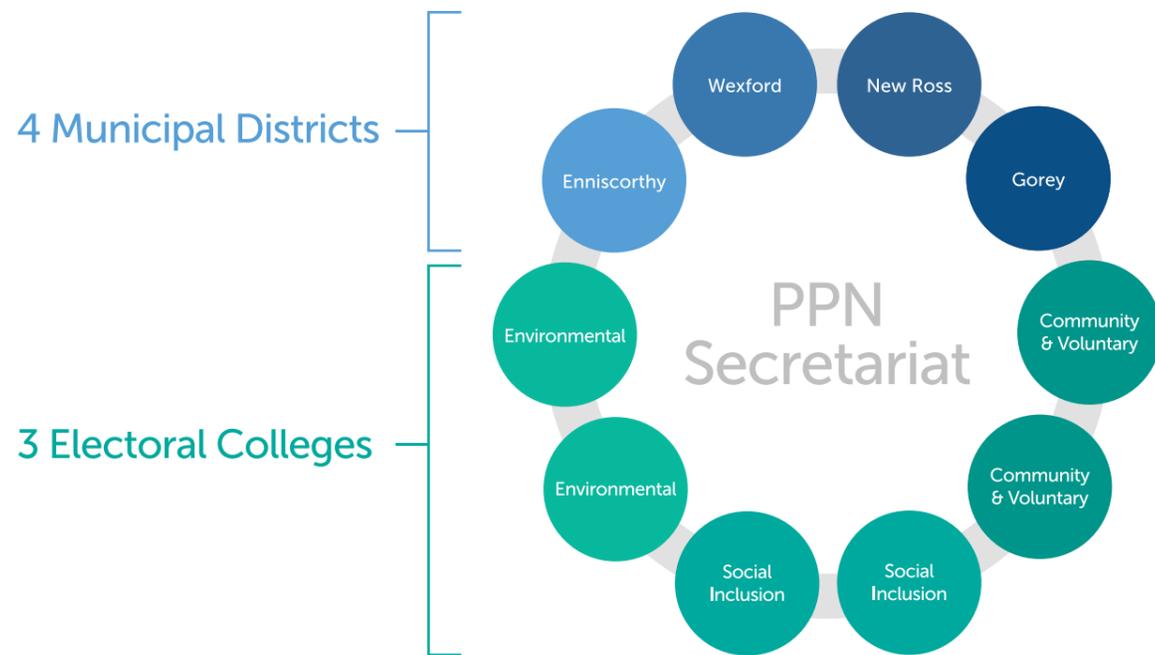
In 2017 Wexford PPN collaborated with Wexford County Council to provide suggestions for the Healthy Ireland project.

At a national level Wexford PPN has collaborated with other PPNs for national promotion activity such as The Wheel Conference stand and masterclass and PPN Stand at National Ploughing Championships.

08. PPN Operations

PPN operate a FLAT structure. This means that all groups in the PPN have an equal voice and an equal input into decision making. There is no leader, no overall spokesperson or chairperson. The main decision making body of the PPN is the Plenary (i.e. all the independent member groups) which meet at least twice every year to review the workings of the PPN and set the agenda for the coming period.

The elected Secretariat is responsible for the administration of the PPN between Plenary meetings. The membership of the Secretariat is designed to be as broad as possible, and reflective of the diversity of the membership. It must include at least one representative from each of the Municipal Districts in a county, and equal numbers (but at least two people) from each of the three electoral colleges (Environmental, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary). With this structure Wexford PPN Secretariat should have at least 10 members.



At the end of 2017 Wexford PPN Secretariat had six members and four vacancies. Wexford PPN Secretariat met 14 times in 2017.

A Secretariat Replacement Policy was drafted in 2017 adopted at the October Plenary. This policy provides for an annual election process, where one third of the Secretariat are replaced each year, with the term per elected member to be maximum three years. Secretariat elections will take place in March each year.

Day to Day operations are managed by the PPN Support Officer, a full time worker, under the management of the PPN Secretariat.

09. Budget & Expenditure

Wexford PPN is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development & by Wexford County Council. The available budget is €80,000 in the calendar year, funded as follows;

- Department of Rural and Community Development will provide five eights of actual spend, to a maximum of €50,000
- Wexford County Council undertakes to provide at least €30,000

Below are details of the budget set out for 2017 and the actual expenditure.

2017	Budgeted	Actual
Staff Salary (incl. PRSI)	€44,535.90	€45,510.10
Staff Expenses (incl. T&S)	€2,509.10	€2,968.01
PPN Rep Travel & Subsistence Expenses	€3,300	€2,600
Rent / Hosting at Wexford County Council	€6,306.80	€6,306.80
Postage / Telephone	€844	€1,636.68
Office Supplies / Stationery	€150	€304.27
Training & Development	€11,000	€6,453.90
Website / Hosting	€250	€1,902.45
IT Support & Maintenance	€150
Marketing and Promotion	€3,500	€7,662.42
Projects / Activities / Events	€5,470	€1,022.01
Room Hire / Refreshments	€324	€1,476.34
Plenary Costs	€1,980	€3,691.74
Consultancy – Workplan & Strategy Development	€1,220.36
Total Expenditure	€80,319.80	€82,755.08

10.

Reflections on 2017 Workplan

Key Challenges in the 2017 Workplan

Wexford PPNs 2017 workplan aimed to meet the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) requirements set out for the PPN and to build greater awareness and understanding of Wexford PPN. It was felt that this activity would provide a solid foundation from which Wexford PPN could grow.

It was a very ambitious plan and aimed to have Wexford PPN catch up with the pace of development in PPN in other locations across Ireland. Wexford PPN was without a dedicated support worker until late August 2016 and so 2017 was about establishing ourselves and our brand, filling vacancies, and beginning the capacity building function.

Member Handbook Development work was overtaken by the www.wexfordppn.ie website and it was felt that utilising the website for this function would ensure greater future-proofing.

Wellbeing Statement Development was postponed as a toolkit for the Wellbeing Statement is still being developed and piloted.

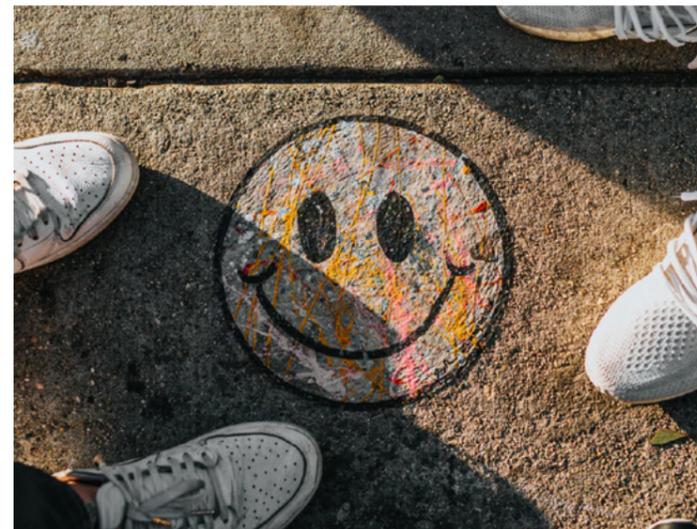
Wexford PPN had planned 16-20 PPN Pop-ups to encourage understanding and engagement – 4-6 per Municipal District (MD) in 2017. Pop-ups were to be small information meetings about Wexford PPN, held in a range of communities across the county. Volunteer time and commitment in progressing other PPN activities did not allow for this activity in 2017. The PPN Animation was developed somewhat as an alternative and promoted through the libraries, and on our facebook page.

Information Provision, in the form of PPN Information Bulletins and facebook updates, grew significantly and anecdotally became a key deliverable to members. However, research and preparation of this activity is time-consuming and took up more Support Officer time than originally planned.

Linkage Group meetings were poorly attended and this specific activity was abandoned in 2017 – incorporating linkage groups within Municipal District meetings. The level of meetings proposed within the PPN structures appears prohibitive.

Quarterly review meetings, as set out in the Memorandum for Understanding with Wexford County Council, were not all held. Two such meetings took place one in April & one in November.

As was outlined in the National PPN Annual Report 2016, the workload within PPNs is too much for one individual. Lack of resource therefore limits the ability of Wexford PPN to meet all of its requirements. Having the experience of 2017 Wexford PPN is now better informed for both budgeting and work planning in 2018.



Thank You!

Wexford PPN Secretariat would like to thank the PPN Support Officer for all the preparation and work completed in 2017, and look forward to working together in 2018.

Wexford Public Participation Network (PPN) is a network of not-for-profit volunteer led groups spread across County Wexford. Groups include community & voluntary, environmental, & social inclusion groups active within the county.

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