

Event Report from Annette Dupuy, PPN Support Officer



National PPN 2018 Conference

Athlone, 11th & 12th October 2018

Event Description

This was the second National PPN Conference. This year was a two day event but I only attended on 11th and so this report focuses on Day 1 only.

Introduction by Bairbre Nic Aongusa, Assistant Secretary, Dept. of Rural and Community Development, in which she outlined the support by the Dept. of PPN and active citizen participation within democracy, citing the Citizens Assembly as a recognised expression of same. She acknowledged the workloads of PPN Resource Workers and hoped that there would be positive news on additional supports in 2019.

The Chair of Westmeath County Council welcomed attendees, while the C. E. of Westmeath thanked the working group that organised the conference.

Following introductions four presentations were given on Good Practice in PPNs

- **Westmeath PPN Municipal interaction:** highlighting how PPNs feed into the plans of the MDs by providing community issues and suggestions.
- **Carlow PPN Consultation toolkit:** a project where they looked at how people would like to be consulted with and to design a toolkit for use following same.
- **Fingal PPN – Community/Mayors awards:** Highlighting the collaborative approach taken and the impact for both parties.
- **Wicklow PPN – Well being, local statement:** Highlighting the road to development of the wellbeing statement as one of the pilot PPNs who had undertaken this process.

This was followed by breakout sessions where attendees were given the choice of attending one of six sessions. I attended the one entitled **PPNs, LAs, & the Future**. This session was attended by a mix of LA officials, PPN Secretariat Members/Reps and PPN Workers. The focus was on SPCs, JPC & LCDC meetings. What I took out of it was the need for greater induction and training for all when they join such meetings – understanding the work of the meeting and the role of all of the other participants. Where this was in place participation seemed to be more effective. Discussions were also held around meeting timings – with day time meetings prevalent but less likely to engage some volunteer participants due to work commitments etc. Overall there is still work to be done on both sides for more effective participation.

The afternoon gave the opportunity to attend a fieldtrip and I attended the Offaly Field Trip. This trip visited the Ferbane Food Campus (www.ferbanefoodcampus.ie) and the Pullough Community Shop (<https://www.facebook.com/Pullough-Community-Shop-862050977267751/>). Both sites visited were excellent but very different to each other. However, common learning for me were;

- The importance of community leaders to drive activity.
- Necessity caused action in both cases
- Asking for help and networking was key in their success.

The additional benefit of the fieldtrips was the time to network and chat to others in attendance. It allowed mixing with other PPN workers, Secretariats, Reps, Members and Local Authority officials.

I would recommend more PPN Members attend this event if happening again in 2019.

End of report