

**Building vibrant and sustainable communities in rural Ireland. A rural conversation.
Waterford Institute of Technology on 4th April, 2019.**

Report from Noel Stacey, Wexford PPN Secretariat

This event was organised by the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) and held in Waterford Institute of Technology on 4th April, 2019.

It was the third of three rural conversations at which voluntary and employed representatives from rural and community organisations attended as well as experts on the subject.

Wexford PPN was represented by Mr. Noel Stacey, member of the PPN Secretariat.

The topics were discussed in a facilitated roundtable format with each table then presenting their views which were recorded and discussed.

A presentation on "Setting the Scene" was given showing that 42% of the population live in rural areas and that there will be an extra one million people living in Ireland by 2040.

It outlined the five pillars in place to realise our rural potential. It also acknowledged the challenges facing the rural landscape such as broadband, post office closures, Brexit etc.

Importantly, it illustrated the many positive programmes and projects underway such as, the range of grant schemes, the regional action plans for jobs, SICAP, the greenway / blueway tourism initiatives in place and being developed as well as for example I.T. digital skills training etc.

The topics were:

What are the characteristics of vibrant and sustainable communities in rural Ireland?

What policy actions need to be taken to ensure that rural communities are resilient, vibrant and inclusive, and better equipped for the challenges of the future?

The RIA is making the presentations and the recordings of the three conversations available on its website:

<https://www.ria.ie/rural-conversations>