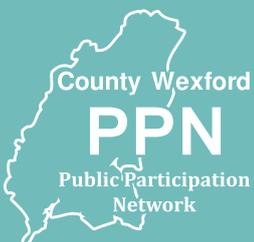
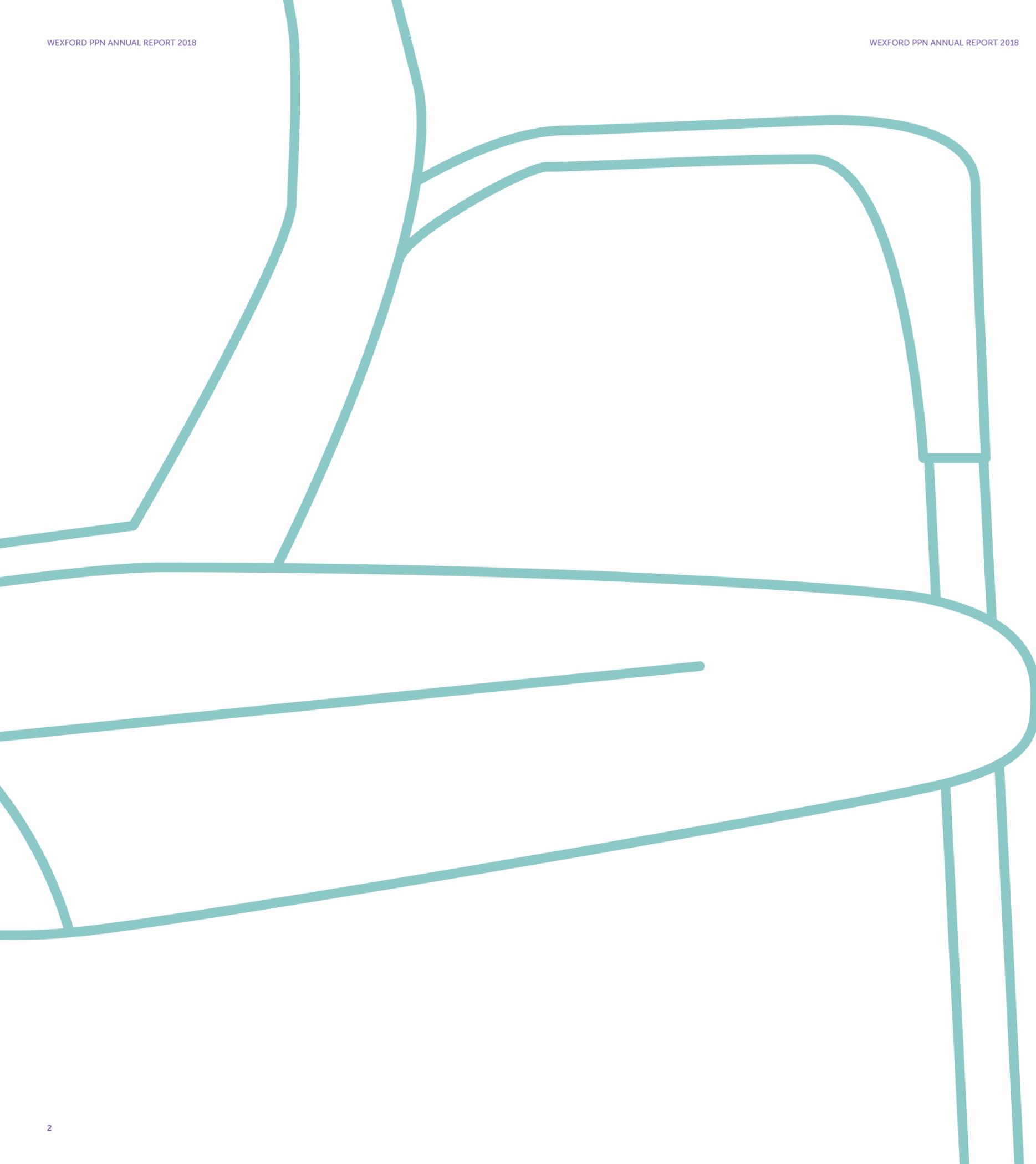


Wexford Public Participation Network

Annual Report 2018





Contents

Introduction.....	4
PPN Membership.....	6
Strategic Focus & Workplan Development.....	8
Informing	9
Developing	10
Representing	12
Membership Meetings.....	14
Promoting the Network.....	15
PPN Operations	16
Budget & Expenditure	17
Collaboration	18
Reflections on 2018.....	19

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, and social inclusion groups active within the county.

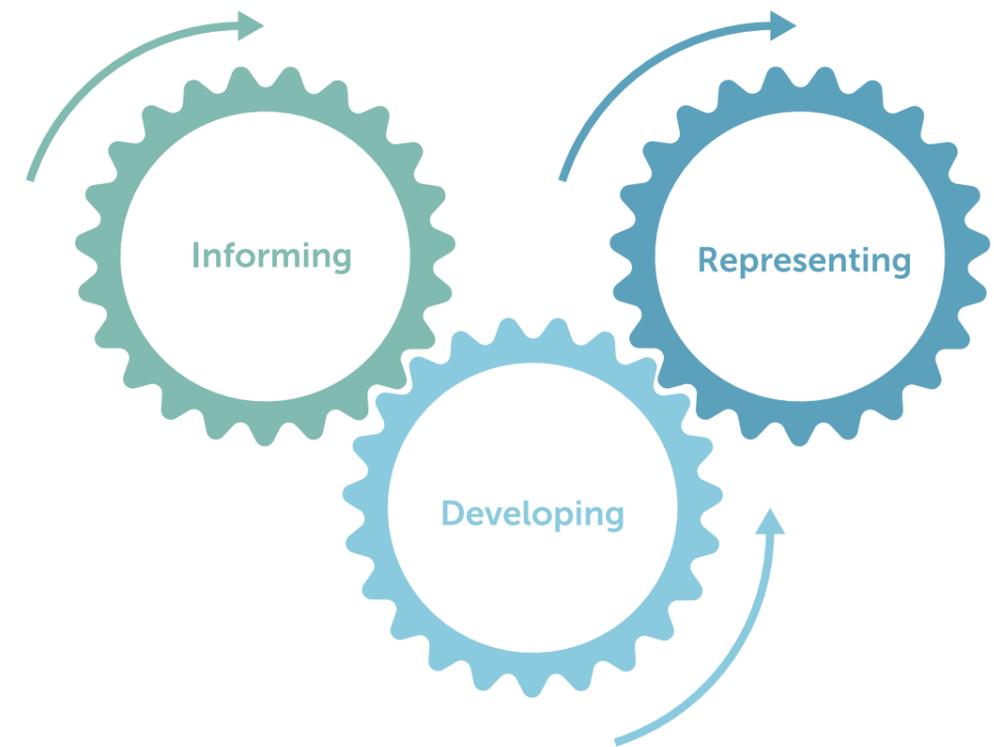
Public Participation Networks (PPNs) were established by the Irish Government under the Local Government (Reform) Act 2014 to be the main link through which the Local Authority connects with these groups. This law followed the 2013 report of the Working Group on the Citizen Engagement with Local Government, 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 & 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 & 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 & 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**.

During 2018 Wexford PPN worked to deliver on this remit as we hope this report shows.

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

At the end of 2018 Wexford PPN had 319 Member Groups. This number represented growth on 2016 levels of over 10%.

Our growing membership

Total Number of Groups	2016	2017	2018
Community & Voluntary	216	239	248
Environment	8	8	10
Social Inclusion	62	69	61
Total	286	316	319

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 319 member groups assures an up to date active register of PPN Member Groups in Wexford.

In 2018, in line with PPNs across Ireland, Wexford PPN moved to use of the Salesforce database. The move to this system required all groups to complete full re-registration, providing all details once again. This was a significant task for member groups and Wexford PPN.



At registration, groups are asked to identify the main cause of their group. In 2018, the following was the mix of causes represented by Wexford PPN:

Main Cause of Group	No
Community Development	70
Sports/Outdoor Activities	33
Arts, Culture & Media.....	28
Community Centre	24
Older People/Active Retired	20
Women’s Groups	17
Youth.....	16
Environment & Conservation	15
Children.....	13
Social Inclusion	12
Heritage/Museums/Galleries	12
Men’s Groups	8
Crime/Safety.....	8
Residents Associations.....	7
Intellectual/Learning Disability	6
Volunteering & Active Citizenship	6
Physical Disability	5

All other causes were below 5 mentions each

Strategic Focus & Workplan Development

In late 2017, Wexford PPN Secretariat commissioned Ahearne & Collins to conduct a facilitated process of Strategy Development for Wexford PPN. This process was designed with an immediate aim of developing a 2018 Workplan and with a longer term aim of developing a three year strategy for Wexford PPN.

The work focus for 2018 took into consideration the following;

- Current gaps identified by members
- Targets for the PPN set out in the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)
- Resource available – one full time worker
- Available budget

The Strategy Sessions identified four key aims;

1. To develop a further understanding of the PPN, in order to increase engagement and participation in the network.
2. To enhance the quality of participation and representation by communities on local decision-making bodies.
3. To provide comprehensive information relevant to environmental, social inclusion and voluntary groups.
4. To help community & voluntary groups to further develop their skills.

The workplan set out specific objectives under each of these aims and actions during 2018 to meet these objectives.

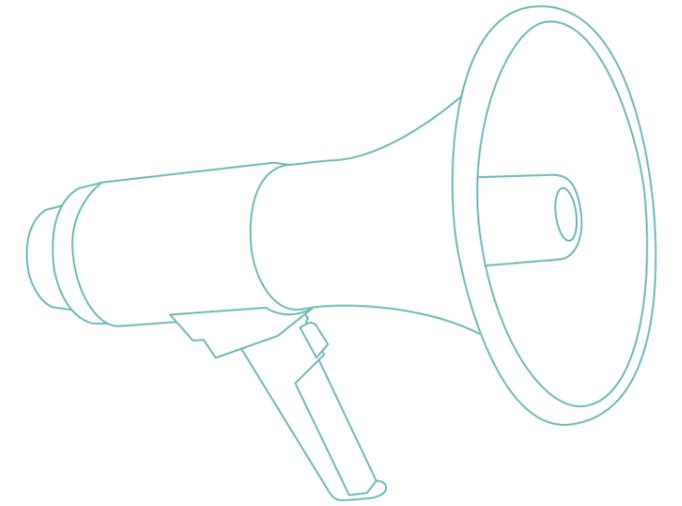
Informing

As Informing is a core function of PPNs, the strategic aim to provide comprehensive information relevant to environmental, social inclusion and voluntary groups, falls under this function.

Feedback from members highlights the Informing function as one of the key practical membership benefits.

Wexford PPN has undertaken a range of initiatives in 2018. These include:

- Regular information bulletins to members highlighting a range of information such as: current grants and supports available, capacity building opportunities, notice of updates/reports from representatives, and sharing member events and activities. During 2018, 34 such bulletins were issued to members. Bulletins were delivered via email, with hard copy to those without email access.
- Information was also shared on our facebook page which is very active. At the end of 2018, this page had 930 likes, up from 382 at the same time in 2017.
- Facebook content also feeds to Wexford PPN Twitter account but current resource does not allow for more activity on this platform at this point in time.
- Wexford PPN also created two Newsletters during 2018. The Newsletters were designed to provide an update on activity and what's happening at Wexford PPN.
- One to one information provision to members contacting the office, or engaging with PPN Representatives across the county.



Some member feedback to our PPN Support Officer on the information provision:



"Thank you for all your correspondence during 2018 as it's a great service you provide."



"Thank you for all your support and help throughout 2018. Our members love getting all the updates and knowing what is happening in the county. The committee are especially grateful for all the practical information and encouragement that the PPN and yourself in particular have given us this year."



"Many thanks for all the very useful and interesting information that you distributed to us all."

Developing

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 16 free training sessions for members in 2018. These sessions covered the following areas:

- Skills Development
- Governance
- Field Trip
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Awareness
- Befriending Information Session
- Shared Learnings

Courses and events were as follows:

Name/ Topic	Target Group	Topics Covered	Number of Sessions Held	Duration of Sessions
Skills Development	All members	Committee Skills & CPR/ First Aid	4 Sessions	CPR/FA: 7 hours Committee Skills: 3 hours
Governance	All members	Garda Vetting, GDPR, Safeguarding	3 Sessions	3 hours
Field Trip	Social Inclusion & Social Enterprise	Meet Wicklow PPN, Wicklow Traveller Group, Shuttleknit	1 Session	7 hours
Shared Learning	All members	Watching Wheel Webinars as a group at County Hall including risk management, grant writing, fundraising, press releases, governance	5 Sessions	1.5 hours
SDG Awareness	Members and others – LA, Agencies etc	Sustainable Wexford for All – SDG's and their application	2 Sessions	2 hours
Befriending Information Session with Alone	Members and general public	What it is, how it works	1 Session	1.5 hours



In addition, Wexford PPN supported members to attend seminars, events and conferences, and to report back so all members could benefit from the shared learning.

Conferences and Seminars included:

1. Wheel Summit
2. UCD Seminar – Disability; Political Representation and Activism
3. UCC Seminar – Spaces for Change
4. Community Connect Conference
5. PPN National Conference

Wexford PPN feel there is an opportunity for members to become more engaged with County Hall. To facilitate this engagement, an Art Tour of the Local Authority Art Collection, in collaboration with County Wexford Arts

Department, was organised at Wexford County Hall. This tour also allowed attendees to see the Council Chamber, where the decisions affecting our community are made.

National and regional networking was undertaken by Wexford PPN in order to further develop Wexford PPN and its members through shared learning. These included:

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

Representing

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 & 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.

PPN Representative Seats

Wexford PPN has 30 Representatives Seats on 12 Committees. These representations are broken down as follows:



21 PPN Representative seats across seven different Wexford County Council Committees...

Board or Committee	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

Nine PPN Representative seats across other key Committees...

Board or Committee	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
Connecting for Life Wexford – Implementation Steering Group (ISG)	1 Position	Community Representative
Wexford Traveller Inter – Agency Group (TIG)	4 Positions	One per Municipal District

The Connecting For Life and Wexford Traveller Inter-Agency were new representation opportunities for Wexford PPN in 2018.

Outside of the representations listed above the PPN Support Officer (SO) also sits on the Community Resilience Steering Group at Wexford County Council, representing Wexford PPN.

Representative Role

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.

PPN Representatives agree to abide by the PPN Representative Charter developed in early 2017 and ratified at the County Membership Meeting on 27th February 2017.

Representative Training & Support

New Reps received a face to face induction session from Wexford PPN. For the most part the committees themselves did not offer induction to new Reps in 2018 – although this was encouraged by Wexford PPN.

PPN Reps were invited to attend regional training offered by Social Justice Ireland. Wexford PPN also ran Sustainable Development Goal training that PPN Reps were encouraged to attend.

Two Reps Roundtable events were conducted in 2018 – 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.

Engaging with PPN Representatives

PPN members can engage with their PPN Reps at membership meetings. This gives members at least four face to face opportunities to engage with their Reps annually. Reps also provide written committee meeting reports for members, which are available online on our website. Queries to Reps are also facilitated through the PPN Support Office.

Wexford PPN thanks all of the volunteer Reps for their work and commitment in 2018.

“Volunteers are not paid – not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.”

Membership Meetings

Wexford PPN organised a range of events in 2018, offering members the opportunity to engage with the network. Outside of the Training Sessions for members, the following events were open to members for engagement in the network in 2018.

Plenary Meetings

Plenary meetings are meetings of all member groups in the county. Two plenary meetings were held in 2018 – one in March and a second in October.

In addition to the membership meeting, the Plenary event in March 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.

These Plenary Meetings included key note speakers as follows:

March 2018

'The Importance of the PPN in Local Government'
Tom Enright, Chief Executive, Wexford County Council

October 2018

'Understanding the work of Wexford Local Development & how they can assist in Supporting Your Communities'
Mr Brian Kehoe, CEO, Wexford Local Development

Municipal District Meetings

Eight Municipal District meetings were held in Wexford in 2018, 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.

Meetings were held in April/May and November with the following guest speakers at each event:

April/May 2018

Introduction to Wexford Money Advice & Budgeting Service
Lynda Stacey, Money Advice Co-ordinator, Wexford MABS

Introduction to Wexford Volunteering Information Services
Debbie Dillon, Wexford Volunteering Information Services

November 2018

Introduction to Community Policing – Presentation made by Local Community Policing representative of An Garda Síochána in each district

PPN Summer Celebration

Wexford PPN hosted a Celebration Event at Irish National Heritage Park in July 2018. This event was held to launch our 2017 Annual Report and to celebrate Wexford PPN's work to date.

The celebration was designed to recognise and thank the membership for their participation and commitment in the past year. The event was enhanced by the musical contribution of member groups.

One attendee summed up the event saying:

'This evening shows that the PPN is a diverse, inclusive, participatory, and independent organisation, and that it is of relevance to community and voluntary organisations all across Wexford.'

Promoting the Network

The need for promotion of Public Participation Networks and their role has been identified at a national level. The 2017 National PPN Annual Report, commissioned by the National Advisory Group, reported as one of the national recommendations a need for more promotion of the PPNs.

With Wexford PPN having a strategic aim of developing a further understanding of the PPN, in order to increase engagement and participation in the network, the organisation planned a number of actions for 2018.

The following initiatives were undertaken in 2018 to meet this aim:

- Attendance at Summer Shows (Agricultural Shows) and other public events to increase general awareness of PPNs and Wexford PPN specifically. Stands were manned by PPN Volunteers. Five such activities were completed in 2018.
- Wexford PPN was also involved in manning the national PPN Stand at National Ploughing Championships.
- Presentation at member events when invited – three such activities were undertaken in 2018.
- PPN Reps attending key events across the county and nationally.
- 2017 Annual Report Launch Event highlighting and celebrating work to date. Copies of Wexford PPN Annual Report freely available at all PPN events and promotional activity.
- PPN Introduction Flyers produced and sent to key locations of libraries, citizen information etc.
- Regular press releases to local newspapers following events.

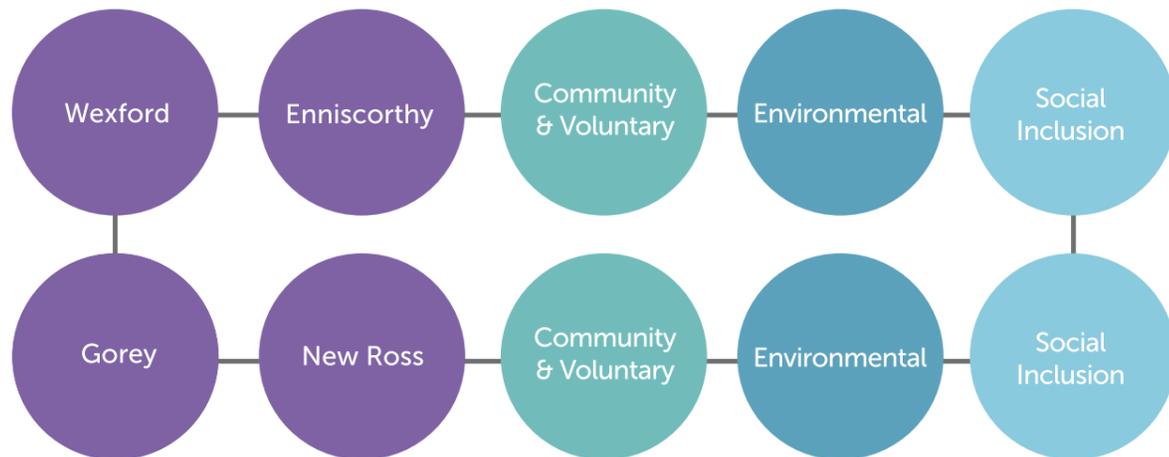
- Wexford PPN merchandise including PPN Membership stickers and diary for members to increase brand presence. This was in addition to promotional material and giveaways at shows/ events such as branded pens and post-its.



- Small local gatherings of groups in an area called 'PPN Huddles' to increase awareness and understanding of PPN – two held in 2018.
- Maintenance of www.wexfordppn.ie website which is the 'go to' location for information about Wexford PPN for both members and non-members.
- Offering options of both online and hardcopy registration for member groups.

Wexford PPN also aimed to promote the PPN within the Local Authority. Short presentations were made available to staff on the role and function of the organisation and how they could engage with Wexford PPN. A double-sided one page Information Sheet was given to staff at these sessions, highlighting the role of Wexford PPN and means of engagement with the organisation. Two of these sessions were delivered to Fire Service staff in July and September 2018.

PPN Operations



PPNs 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 & Voluntary). With this structure, Wexford PPN Secretariat should have at least 10 members.

Wexford PPN Secretariat had eight members at the end of 2018, with the New Ross MD

plus the two Environment Seats remaining vacant. With a volunteer available, Wexford PPN Secretariat had taken an additional Social Inclusion Rep to spread the workload.

Wexford PPN Secretariat met once a month, on average, in 2018 and utilised a range of sub-committees to manage the workload. All decisions needed Secretariat approval.

A Secretariat Replacement Policy is in place, as agreed by the membership. 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 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. Funding for a temporary PPN Support Worker was announced by the Department of Rural & Community Development in late 2018.

Budget & Expenditure

In the table below are details of the budget set out for 2018 and the actual expenditure.

2018	Budgeted	Actual
Staff Salary (incl. PRSI)	€43,472.61	€45,070.59
Staff Expenses (incl. T&S)	€2,750	€2,055.35
PPN Rep Travel & Subsistence Expenses	€3,300	€3,325
Rent / Hosting at Wexford County Council	€6,306.80	€6,306.80
Postage / Telephone	€840	€2,453.60
Office Supplies / Stationery	€300	€554.13
Training & Development	€9,475	€8,789.25
Website / Hosting	€250	€0
IT Support & Maintenance	€150	€200
Marketing and Promotion	€3,500	€4,086.80
Projects / Activities / Events	€4,420	€1,533.50
Room Hire / Refreshments	€1,800	€1,955.07
Plenary Costs	€3,700	€5,074.12
Consultancy – Workplan	€1,500	€2,045.32
Total Expenditure	€81,764.41	€83,449.53

Wexford PPN is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and 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 eighths of actual spend, to a maximum of €50,000
- Wexford County Council undertakes to provide at least €30,000.

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. As stated earlier, Wexford MABS, Wexford VIS, and An Garda Síochána presented at Wexford PPN Municipal District meetings to increase awareness and understanding of these organisations.

At a national level Wexford PPN has collaborated with other PPNs for national promotion activity such as PPN Stand at National Ploughing Championships.

Outside of these collaborations, the following are examples of collaboration that Wexford PPN undertook in 2018:

1. Collaborated with Wexford Arts Department to showcase Artists for Creative Community Scheme at our County Membership Meeting.
2. Collaborated with Wexford Arts Department to offer an Art Tour for PPN Members.
3. Collaborated with the Access Office on a Disability Implementation Strategy event.
4. Collaborated with the Access Office on promotion of 'Make Way Day'.
5. Collaborated with Wexford LCDC (Local Community Development Committee) to recruit community groups for the Quit.ie stencilling project from Healthy Ireland.
6. Collaborated with a range of organisations and agencies on the Community Resilience Steering Committee at Wexford County Council – including assisting in the development of a community resilience brochure.
7. Met with Disability Federation of Ireland to progress the Disability thematic network.

Reflections on 2018

In completing this report, Wexford PPN Secretariat has reflected on the work completed, the challenges faced, and the opportunities available for greater participation in the future.

Having the focus of the Strategic Aims allowed Wexford PPN to have a clear plan for 2018 and, where possible, this plan was actioned. However, where action was not taken it was impacted mostly by available resource – both volunteer and paid. Items not actioned in 2018 have been examined for action in 2019.

With only one worker, the Support Office was dependent on this individual and had to close during annual leave, days off etc. This became more apparent with the PPN Support Officer taking four weeks parental leave during summer 2018. To partially meet this resource gap, Wexford PPN engaged a part time Summer Student to offer skeleton cover during this time.

Nationally, the 31 PPNs have resolved some of the challenges faced in 2018, but there are still many to be overcome. The need for promotion, additional resources, and improved support and recognition of PPNs across the country is recognised in the National PPN 2017 Annual Report. Wexford PPN concurs with these recommendations.

We look forward to building upon our achievements to date in 2019.

Wexford PPN Secretariat would like to thank the PPN Support Officer for all the work completed in 2018, and look forward to working together in 2019.

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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Supported by:



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