

**2nd Meeting of the Second PPN National Advisory Group,  
25 Clare Street, Dublin on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017.**

**Attendance:**

**Stakeholder Group: Pillar Representatives:**

- Michael Ewing (Environmental Pillar).
- Sean Healy (Social Inclusion Pillar).

**Stakeholder Group: PPN Volunteers:**

- Aileen Eglington (Dun Laoghaire Rathdown PPN; C&V representative).

**Stakeholder Group: PPN Resource Workers:**

- Helen Howes (Wicklow PPN).
- Annette Barr Jordan (Westmeath PPN).
- Jamie Moore (Fingal PPN).

**Stakeholder Group: Department of Rural and Community Development:**

- Officials - Jason Kearney (Chair), Deirdre Kearney, Alan Monks, Niall Hayden.

**Apologies:**

- Bernie Doherty, (Dublin City Council).
- Donal Brennan, (Laois County Council, Director of Services).
- Catherine Lane, (C&V pillar).
- Sadhbh O'Neill, (Kilkenny PPN; Environment representative).

Tricia Nolan, South Dublin Volunteer Centre was invited to attend to update the Advisory Group on the progress with the Database.

The minutes of the meeting of 11<sup>th</sup>. October were agreed to with one minor amendment pertaining to the item on Wellbeing.

## **PPN Conference 2017 - Sligo**

On behalf of the Advisory Group, the Chair commended all those in Sligo who were involved in the organising of the National Conference. The Minister has written directly to the CEO and Geraldine Timlin congratulating both and the team in Sligo for the great job done.

The Advisory Group proposed that a National Conference for 2018 be held earlier in the year. A sub group was established to examine the feasibility of this and would look at issues relating to: location, agenda, speakers and budget. The sub group members are Jamie Moore, Aileen Eglington and Annette Barr Jordan and are to report to the Advisory Group by Mid-January.

### *Action Points:*

- *The Advisory Group to write to Sligo congratulating them on their organising of the 2017 Conference.*
- *Sub Group on the 2017 Annual Report to report back to the Advisory Group by Mid-January 2018.*

## **Salesforce**

Tricia Nolan gave a short presentation and update on the database and its use by PPN's. Overall the Database is proving its worth to users. Many report that they are finding it to a very useful tool for maintaining the network, particularly in the matter of meetings. Some sample stats from the data collected:

- 12,125 Groups are on the system.
- 528,486 Members (Workers and Volunteers).

**Training** for 2018 was discussed briefly. The main points coming from the discussion were that:

- Turnover of PPN staff and the inability by some workers to use the system was proving a problem.
- One-on-one training as opposed to Group training would be considered.
- There are costs involved for individual PPN's where training is deemed outside the scope of the allocated budget.
- There was a need to have more than one individual trained up on the Database to allow each PPN to operate smoothly.

The Department gave a commitment to fund training in 2018 comparable with what had been agreed to and provided for in 2017.

**Privacy** and data protection on the system was raised in the context of the levels of information the database held and could gather. The group were assured that the system is focused on numbers and doesn't contain personal information. From the Departments perspective, Data Protection concerns have been exhaustively examined and addressed. At this stage, there were no valid reasons for any PPN to refuse to use the database on data protection grounds. The Chair sought and received approval of the group to issue a circular to PPN's in the matter. The Chair also stressed the importance it was now for the Department to be getting a national picture of PPN activity etc.

To allay and lingering doubts it was agreed that a written protocol for users would be drawn up.

*Action Points:*

- *Department Circular to be drafted and issued in the new year to PPN's.*
- *Protocol to be drafted and issued to PPN's for users of the database.*

### **Audits**

The Advisory Group were advised that accounts of expenditure in 2016 from nine selected PPN's had been received and are now being reviewed. The outcome of this examination will be advised to the Group in due course. It is intended that accounts of expenditure incurred in 2017 will be requested from other PPN's in 2018.

Jamie Moore requested that the average expenditure – Salaries etc., of the audited PPN's could be supplied to the Group. This was agreed to by the Chair.

*Action Point:*

- *Average costs extrapolated from the audits to be provided to the Advisory Group.*

### **Environmental Pillar.**

Michael Ewing advised the Advisory Group that a new staff member has been employed by the Environmental Pillar since August specifically to encourage environmental groups to join the PPNs. All 31 PPN have been contacted in this regard, 22 of whom have engaged with the pillar while, nine have not replied. The Chair agreed to the suggestion from Michael Ewing that the issue of non-engagement by some PPN's would be discussed outside the meeting.

Aside from engaging with PPN's the Environmental Pillar has been looking at a relaxing of the existing criteria that would make it easier for groups to become members. The right of the Environmental Pillar to continue its vetting of groups irrespective of criteria was noted and accepted.

Other suggestions on facilitating membership of the E.P. by environmental groups/organisation were:

- Environmental speakers should be invited to speak at plenaries to advise on practises and resources.
- Tidy Towns need advice regarding harmful chemical sprays.
- Each Tidy Town will need to be judged independently on the environmental criteria.
- Need to establish links with County Councils to work on environmentalism.  
Aileen Eglinton advised that Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown CC will make contact with the Environmental Pillar in relation to this. Jamie Moore advised that the four Dublin PPN's were jointly organising an environmental seminar for their membership.

The meeting concluded this section of the Agenda by agreeing that a pathway to membership of the Environmental Sector (PPN's) for groups/organisations should be developed. Michael Ewing agreed that the Environmental Pillar would develop this guide/pathway.

*Action Points:*

- *'New' Criteria for membership of the Environmental Pillar to be circulated to Advisory Group by Michael Ewing.*
- *Non engagement by some PPN's to be discussed by Chair and Env. Pillar.*
- *Pathway document to be developed by Environmental Pillar.*
- *Item to remain on the Agenda*

**Capacity Building and Training.**

Deirdre Kearney updated the meeting on progress to date.

- Local Government Section of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has been approached regarding the provision of training on Local Government structures and are to revert.
- LCDC training has also been raised. Leon Fox (DCRD Ballina) is liaising with Resource Workers to address capacity training.

Suggestions under this heading included:

- Stronger networks need to be established between PPN's and LCDC's.
- LA Officers and workers need a closer relationship with PPN's.
- Both need the same training to improve PPN capacity. Those in senior positions need more targeted training.
- Sean Healy outlined the training events organised in 2017 by Social Justice Ireland. A similar programme could be rolled out in 2018

### *Resource Workers*

Training needs for 2018 were outlined by Jamie Moore for the Resource Workers:

- Resource Workers are planning to hold three workshops in 2018 to be held over two days. These will help PPN's develop a toolkit.
- Confidence building and Presentation Skills will be a component of these courses.
- The structuring of budgets and spending will also be part of this training.

A written submission will be made to the Department to assist in the running of these workshops.

### *Secretariat*

It was recommended that Secretariats must be included in any plans for training and capacity building considering their specific role in the continued development of PPN's. The Group agreed with this recommendation.

In the matter of Secretariat's generally, the suggestion was made that this group needed its own network similar to what the Resource Workers have developed. The Chair advised that while the Department would not be calling for a network, however, if it was mooted and there was support amongst the various Secretariats, the Department would offer similar support as it does for the Resource Workers network.

### *Conflict Resolution.*

Continuing on the theme of capacity building and training, working relationships between the different partners that make up the PPN was discussed. Of particular concern for some members was the issue of conflict resolution and the need for codes of conduct, including an appeals mechanism to resolve conflict issues.

It was accepted that negativity and conflict need to be addressed at some point, sooner rather than later and in that regard it was suggested apart from the required codes and structures, training in this area could be quite beneficial.

In advance of any training publishing online a code of conduct may help alleviate some of these problems. It was suggested that workers should be required to sign this code of conduct agreeing to its principles.

It was also suggested that it may be useful to request other bodies to share their codes of conduct to help create one relevant and appropriate to PPN's

### *Training Database*

Helen Howes suggested on behalf of the Resource Workers that a training database - a training hub of sorts might be considered in time. This hub would act as a resource point for workers and PPN's which they could reference to assist them in matters like codes of conduct, bullying, conflict resolution quite apart from the normal training material it would contain.

### *Action Points:*

- *Follow up on LG training with Dept. Housing Planning & Local Government.*
- *Linkages re LCDC training – follow up*
- *Michael Ewing to supply examples of Codes of Conduct from Environment Pillar.*

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Formal thanks were conveyed to Social Justice Ireland by the Chair on behalf of the Advisory Group and the Department for its work on the 2016 Annual Report. The Report itself is currently in its final draft and following its approval by the Minister, is due to be published later in this month.

### **2017 Annual Report**

As was agreed at the last meeting of the Advisory Group, preparations in relation to the 2017 annual report would need to commence much earlier than had been the case for the 2016 report. To this end it was agreed that a subgroup of the Advisory Group would be set up to initiate the process commencing with the template used for the 2016 report. The group members are Jamie Moore, Helen Howes and Sean Healy. A meeting date before the Christmas break will be arranged by the Department.

## AOB

- Letter from Kilkenny PPN was circulated for information.
- The criteria for serving on a PPN and or employed as a Resource Worker particularly in the context of clear political affiliations may have to be looked in the future to ensure the independence of PPN's is beyond question.
- Wellbeing: It was reported that some workers felt misled about their participation in the project believing the request to participate in the pilot was coming from a national level. Michael Ewing advised the meeting that he was not aware of these concerns and was surprised they had been raised. Neither the documentation that issued nor the communications from the Pillar suggested otherwise.
- Confidentiality of Documents circulated: The meeting was reminded that documents that had been circulated should not be recirculated outside of the Group.
- Communications Plan for 2018 to be included on the Agenda for next meeting of the Group
- A meeting with Minister of State, Sean Kyne, and representatives of the Resource Workers and volunteers has been arranged for the 12<sup>th</sup> of December.
- A request has been received from Indiccon to meet with the PPN's. The Group had no objection to this.
- Size of City PPN's – some may need to broke down to more manageable sizes
- Nomenclature - Michael Ewing requested that for future reference and to promote consistency, the term 'Environmental College' be used for his group.
- Dates for next year's meetings:
  - Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup> of February.
  - Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> of June.

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Niall Hayden

3/01/18