

## **1st. Meeting of the PPN National Advisory Group held in the Custom House Dublin on 13th May 2016.**

### Attendance:

- Emer Connolly, Deirdre Kearney, Niall Hayden (Department of the Environment Community & Local Government),
- Helen Howes (Resource Worker - Wicklow PPN),
- Tess Murphy (S.I. Rep - Longford PPN),
- Olivia Mc Cormack (Dublin PPN, standing in for Bernie Doherty, DoS)
- Sean Healy (Community & Voluntary Pillar)
- Michael Ewing (Environmental Pillar)
- Annette Barr-Jordan ( AO Westmeath Co Co. - Westmeath PPN)
- Charles Stanley-Smith (Env. Rep Tipperary PPN).

### Apologies:

- Geraldine Timlin (Resource Worker - Sligo PPN)
- Siobhan O Dowd ( S.I. Rep, - Cork City PPN)

### *Opening and Introductions.*

The meeting opened with Ms Connolly in her role as Chair, welcoming all in attendance, and outlining in general terms, the role of the group. Each member was then invited to introduce themselves to the group.

### *Purpose and Objectives.*

The Chair expanded on her opening remarks regarding the purpose of the Group. It was acknowledged that openness, transparency and an acceptance by PPN's and all stakeholders were essential to ensure the success of the group and the Network in general. The need to have the Advisory Group commence operation was a priority and while there were question from some quarters as to the launch and formation of the group, the priority for the Department was to establish the group.

### *Structure & Membership.*

The Chair recommended a certain degree of flexibility in the structure and membership of the Group. It was suggested that open seats, a rotating Chair, regional meetings, additional members and invitations to specific individual with and experience/expertise in certain disciplines should be open to discussion for this and any future grouping. How members of the group would be appointed should also be part of future considerations. Specific targets would be set as a priority to ensure focus for the group and PPN's. Membership numbers of 11/12 persons was considered to be best for the group, though this would not be rigid in application. It was agreed that the group would develop options for membership and consult on the matter with relevant stakeholders.

It was agreed that the involvement of the CCMA in the group would be a tremendous advantage from the perspective of their being in a position to give direction to local

authorities. Having all Directors effectively doing the 'same thing' when it comes to their dealings with PPN's could only benefit all concerned. The Chair undertook to follow up on the matter.

It was agreed that representation on the Advisory Group should not reflect the size of one sector (Community/Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion) over another. Equal representation was the guiding principle in this regard.

Finally under this heading it was agreed to circulate a brief note to the PPN's advising them of how the group propose to proceed forward.

#### *User Guide.*

All indications are that the User Guide has been well received by the PPN's. The Chair reiterated the point made in the guide itself that it was a live document, able to be updated and amended and not static. It was important that PPN's and all stakeholders have their say and for that reason, feedback was actively sought from all such stakeholders.

As to immediate feedback, Linkage Groups seem to be posing a challenge for PPN's both in understanding what they are about and how they should operate. It was agreed that the group would monitor the situation. However, it was accepted that prescribing a format to be followed rigidly might not actually be the best approach as PPNs require some degree of flexibility in their activities. It was agreed that ensuring real engagement in the decision making process is a crucial consideration.

The contribution made by Social Justice Ireland in the compilation of and assistance in production of the guide was acknowledged.

#### *Data Base.*

An update on the current status of the proposed database was provided to the meeting by Olivia Mc Cormack, who is a member of the project Steering group. That group is presently compiling advice in the shape of a FAQ which will be of great help for the PPN's.

Ownership of the database arose as a serious concern for the PPNs, an issue the Group fully accepted needs to be resolved as soon as possible.

#### *General PPN issues arising.*

- Flat structure – the concept seems to be a difficult one for quite a few stakeholders to grasp. A possible solution may be for advice to issue from the Group stating that there is no difficulty with nominating people to chair, take notes, assign tasks etc. at each meeting or for an agreed period of time.
- Resource Worker (RW) – the issue of reporting arrangements for the Resource Worker should report to was raised. The group felt that it was important for the RW to have consistency in who they deal with and report to. Different models work in

different situations. However, it was agreed that line management by a local authority of the RW was fundamentally wrong.

- Finances – two issues briefly addressed, the first relates to local authorities dictating expenditure of the PPN and the second relating to the PPN signing off on the LA's element of expenditure. Both issues will be looked at by the Department.
- Guidelines for T&S – there are no set guidelines on travelling and subsistence rates for expenses incurred by persons engaged on PPN activities. Different approaches are being adopted. While the Departments guidelines in so far as attendance at SPC's, LDCP's are clear, it was felt that direction might need to be repeated.

AOB.

#### Charities Regulatory Authority

- Michael Ewing suggested a need for clarification as to the requirements to register with the CRA. According to the CRA's own advice all groups must register by April 2016 while an opposing opinion believes this not to be the case. The Department will follow up on this issue.

#### Training

- The group agreed that with a wide variety of training and up skilling courses on offer to PPN's, there would be no endorsement of any particular course or provider.

#### Sub groups of Groups

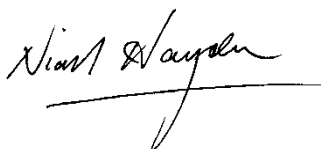
- In the context of registration with the PPN, it was agreed that each group must be a distinct separate entity to fulfil the criteria of registration. Sub groups or branches of a main group would thus be ineligible to register with the PPN.

#### Status of Individuals seeking election

- A short exchange of views on the appropriate requirements for Secretariat members running for election (political) to resign from the PPN took place. It was agreed that the matter would be considered in greater detail at the group's next meeting.

Other issues briefly discussed included conflict resolution and closer co-operation between PPN activities and Government policies

Next Meeting - Early September 2016, exact date to be confirmed.



Niall Hayden

6/7/16