

National Advisory Group

Date/Time: Monday 20th June, 10:30 am

Venue: Webex via Department of Rural and Community Development

Minutes

Attendees:

Pillar Representatives:

- Catherine Lane (C&V Pillar).
- Charles Stanley Smyth (Environmental Pillar)

PPN Volunteers:

- Bibiana Savin (South Dublin PPN; Social Inclusion representative),
- Cliona Kelliher (Kildare PPN; Environmental)

PPN Resource Workers:

- Helen Howes (Wicklow PPN),
- Sarah Wetherald (Sligo PPN).
- Kieran Walsh (South Dublin PPN) - Attended meeting but muted as was unwell.

CCMA Representatives:

- Brendan Jennings Cavan County Council

Department of Rural and Community Development:

- Ciara Bates (Chair), Aoife O'Brien, Gillian Moore, Alan Monks.

Apologies:

- Seán Healy (Social Inclusion Pillar)
- Lynda O'Shea (Waterford PPN; C&V representative),
- Elaine Jennings (DRCD)

The Chair opened the meeting which was conducted on-line via Web-ex.

Draft Minutes

1. Opening Remarks by Chair

As it was Bibiana Savin's last meeting, Ciara thanked her for her valuable contribution to the NAG. A replacement will be sought for a new Social Inclusion representative.

A vacancy also exists on the NAG for a CCMA Rep. A nomination is being sought.

It was Gillian Moore's first NAG, Ciara introduced her to the members. Gillian has replaced Caoimhín O 'Tuathail in DRCD.

Ciara also addressed the fact that some NAG members were unable to attend today's meeting, due to work commitments and other Government Meetings running on the same day; apologies were made for this clash of schedules.

2. Adoption of Minutes of 20th Meeting of Group on 29 March 2022

3. Matters Arising

4. Update on PPN Structural Review and proposed implementation roadmap

Minister of State Joe O'Brien has approved the report prepared by Mazars on the Structural Review. He has emphasised the need to encourage youth participation in PPNs.

The launch of the Structural Review Report is scheduled to take place today 20 June. Due to a miscommunication with the Communications Unit in DRCD, the report was published online on Friday 17th June, before notification to stakeholders and its official launch. Ciara apologised for this error. It has since been taken down and will be published later today once the Minister of State's letter to stakeholders has issued.

With regard to next steps, DRCD proposes to circulate a call for input to stakeholders to request written feedback on the report, with a closing date of the end of August. This will give an opportunity for PPNs to provide their initial response to the report. The call for input will go to all PPNs, the RW network, Secretariat network, LAs and a small number of other stakeholders.

The feedback received in response will be used to structure the webinar in September. At present, DRCD proposed that this will consist of a short presentation on the report, an overview of the call for input and the presentation of a skeleton road map/ implementation plan based on feedback to the call for input received. An independent facilitator will be put in place to facilitate discussion and develop the implementation roadmap; it will be necessary to put a procurement process in place to recruit the independent facilitator. In response to a query raised, it was agreed that the webinar will include a participatory/discussion element and some discussion was held on how best to facilitate this in the webinar format.

It is anticipated that a session will also be held on the Implementation Roadmap at the PPN National Conference in Laois in October; it is envisaged that this will also be a participatory, workshop-type session.

At this point, the aim is to have an Implementation Roadmap Plan agreed by the end of the year so that roll out can begin in 2023. Sarah said it would be important to highlight things that are already in the pipeline or that are already being addressed. In this regard, Ciara mentioned the Communications project which is currently underway, the contract for the Advisory Supports service and the research on barriers to participation.

Catherine asked if there was anything in the report about the NAG, and a discussion was held on the operation of the NAG since its establishment. Helen said the NAG has fallen into the trap of being reactive rather than proactive, and it was agreed that the NAG should focus on strategic rather than operational issues. Ciara suggested that it would be useful to include a review of the NAG's terms of reference and performance in the workplan for early 2023, with a view to updating the ToR and membership (in this regard, it was suggested that it would be useful to involve the Dept of Housing, Planning Local Government for example).

5. Subgroups

PPN Handbook-

The hand book procedure is currently under review. The NAG were asked for feedback on the draft update procedure. It was decided that the sub-group would be widened to give a greater number of stakeholders a view/say in the process. Points have been added to the draft update procedure to reflect the key suggestion around broadening who gets to input the updates.

Annual Report-

Returns have been received from all 31 PPN's and 30 LAs. Work has commenced on the compiling of the report. At their February meeting, the AR sub-group requested a meeting in the summer to discuss major changes to future annual report practices in order to streamline the process (including the improving use of Salesforce for data collection and reporting)

A discussion was held on the possibility of producing a shorter AR document, for ease of use, and of the environmental benefits of not producing/circulating as large a document as in previous years. Sarah suggested that a "highlights" document of 2 pages with main statistics would be beneficial. This suggestion will be fed back to AR Sub-group.

Annual Conference-

Plans are in place for the National PPN Conference due to take place on Friday 21st & Saturday 22nd October 2022 in in the Midlands Park Hotel, Jessop St, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. Laois PPN are working on a draft agenda for the conference, to include presentations/workshops and excursions. Minister of State Joe O'Brien will attend the conference and give a speech.

Charles expressed some concern about how expensive the rooms were at the Midlands Park Hotel, and requested information on whether a conference rate is available. Sarah asked if workshops/presentations could be livestreamed for anyone not able to attend the conference in person. Catherine said that the NWCI has previously recorded sessions on a phone and put up online, A discussion was held around the costs of livestreaming, as well as on the need for consent where sessions are being recorded.

6. Recent developments in Meath PPN

Ciara gave a confidential update to the NAG about a number of issues in Meath PPN and actions which DRCD has taken to try and address the issues. This information was shared with the NAG on a confidential basis as members have recently been copied on a number of pieces of correspondence from Meath PPN members, and DRCD felt it was important to explain the background.

Given that the threat of legal action has been made, DRCD will not make any statement on the situation or discuss it in any other forum. DRCD's main concern is to have a fully functioning, operational PPN in place in Meath.

Charles and Kieran both offered their assistance and guidance, should it be useful to the PPN. Sarah asked for further information about the hosting arrangements/structures available to PPNs.

7. Research on Barriers to Participation in the PPNs

DRCD proposes to engage an appropriate outside party to research any barriers to participation that may exist for demographic groups currently under-represented on the PPNs. This evidence base along with any recommendations made from the research report will be used to inform future DRCD initiatives aimed at addressing barriers to participation.

The Department will to draft a TOR for the research on barriers to participation, with the intention of issuing a call for tender for the research in due course.

Helen raised the issue of needing clarity around the topic of youth participation given that Comhairle na nOg were set up to address youth participation. We would need to define “youth” in a PPN perspective, and have clarity on how the roles of PPNs and Comhairle na nOg appropriately meet. Cliona advised we would need to define the age brackets, as ‘young’ in relation to PPNs might mean up to the age of 35. She also advised that engaging with under 18 year olds would come with the need to address child protection/safeguarding. She suggested engaging with linkage/thematic groups to get their views, and developing relationships with stakeholders to explore how to engage with younger groups. Helen suggested contacting Dermot O’Brien from NYCI, for guidance on this. Charles mentioned Green Schools and their potential involvement in PPNs.

DRCD proposes to set up a working group around the research. Helen, Charles, Sarah, Cliona and Catherine expressed an interest in participating. Catherine suggested also including representation of minority voices on the group.

8. AOB

Additional Supports-

The Wheel, in conjunction with Adare HRM, were selected as the winning tenderer, and a contract has been signed for this service.

They will shortly issue a needs analysis survey to all PPNs to determine where support is most needed. This will help them to design the service. In addition to the online survey, a Word version will issue to facilitate consultation within PPNs.

DRCD will meet with Adare next week, to make plans for a webinar to take place in the coming weeks. NAG suggested Adare HRM need to have 3-4 core messages to work on.

Communications Group-

Sarah gave a brief update on the work of the Communications sub group. There has been two meetings with Alice PR held online. Topics of discussion for the meetings have included - who is the audience for this campaign, what is the motivation for joining the PPN. The group will look at logos and branding for the PPN. Sarah said the options on this will go out to a vote for all PPNs as it would be too big to ask just the sub-group to decide.

HR Issues-

Charles brought the issue forward of PPN Staff Entitlements around Maternity Leave, Sick Pay, Increments and Pensions. He suggested that a national view is needed on these issues, especially as the contract for the Advisory Supports Service is now in place.

Ciara suggested that an advice document be put together that could be shared with The Wheel/Adare HRM for their recommendations. However, it is difficult to deal with these issues given the different employment/hosting arrangements in place across the 31 PPNs.

Sarah asked if the Resource Workers Network could send a submission to DRCD around increments and cost of living increases. Ciara said any such submission would be welcome, however it would be important to get in it to DRCD as soon as possible and by July at the latest if it is to be included in the Department's Estimates process for 2023.

Collaborating with other Departments-

Sarah and Charles spoke about the DECC's Climate Conversations project, as PPNs were given a very short timeframe for their involvement in this research and received no feedback afterwards. DRCD did advise that the timeframe given was too short and Ciara wrote to DECC to notify them of this.

Ukrainian groups participation in PPNs-

Sarah asked if it is possible to relax the requirement for groups to be in existence for 6 months in order to join a PPN where Ukrainian groups are concerned. Charles suggested that Ukrainian community groups could be offered associate membership until they can get their governance arrangements in place. Sarah will send on a document setting out a proposal

in this regard to DRCD, for onward circulation to NAG members for their consideration.

9. **Next Meeting: Autumn 2022** *via* Webex/In person in Trinity Point *(To be agreed, DRCD to send out doodle poll)*