



**Submission to WCC Climate Change & Biodiversity Action Strategic
Policy Committee Workplan Development**

By

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Introducing County Wicklow Public Participation Network

County Wicklow Public Participation Network (PPN) was established in July 2014 under the directive of the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government and in accordance with legislation in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (Section 46). Public Participation Networks were established to be an independent structure that would become the main link through which local authorities connect with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in a process to facilitate communities to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system.

Co Wicklow PPN has 324 diverse member groups, some of these groups are networks in their own right. PPN representatives serve as a voice for the community on structures including: the Local Community Development Committee; all of the Wicklow County Council Strategic Policy Committees; Wicklow County Childcare Committee; Co Wicklow Children & Young People's Services Committee; Co Wicklow Local Sports Partnership; Wicklow County Tourism Board; Co Wicklow Volunteer Centre, County Wicklow Partnership, and Co Wicklow Joint Policing Committee. PPN Representatives strive to ensure that the needs of the community sector are prioritised within local policy processes.

Community Consultation

In 2018, Co Wicklow PPN consulted community groups across the 5 Municipal Districts of Co Wicklow, asking them "What is your vision for community wellbeing for this and future generations"? We asked them to consider this question under the following headings:

- Environment & Sustainability
- Health (physical & mental)
- Work, Economy, & Resources
- Social & Community Development
- Participation, Democracy & Good Governance
- Values, Culture & Meaning



The responses we received were documented and are available to download from our website: www.countywicklowppn.ie or they can be read in the "Our Vision for Community Wellbeing in Co Wicklow" booklet. We ran 11 workshops, 5 online consultations and accepted 2 submissions in total. The consultations facilitated the development of an overarching vision for each Municipal District along with community visions and high-level goals under each heading. The county vision was developed in the same way.

Consultation with County Wicklow Environmental Network

County Wicklow Environmental Network is made up of the environmental member groups of Co Wicklow PPN and other groups and individuals that have an interest in the environment and sustainability. The network meets regularly and regionally through the North Wicklow and West Wicklow Environmental Networks and occasionally at county level. It maintains regular electronic contact through the PPN. The Network was surveyed and asked the following:

1. Please list the issues you most want to see considered for inclusion on the SPC's Workplan

2. For each of the issues you identified, please indicate what you would like the council to do about it.

Sharon Jackson, the Co Wicklow PPN West Wicklow Representative on the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee compiled this submission. It is **primarily** informed by the consultations for Our Vision for Community Wellbeing in Co Wicklow and the online consultation through the Co Wicklow Environmental Network. It also takes into consideration conversations and engagement through the West Wicklow Environmental Network and North Wicklow Environmental Network.

Consultation Outputs

There were an even 30 responses and 26 named respondents. The issues that garnered the most comment were: Biodiversity in its various forms, 9 detailed replies, Transport & Home working, 8 detailed replies, Issues around Food & land use, 4 detailed replies. One reply cautioned not to neglect the Marine environment & another that the National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan needs to be applied in Wicklow.

It was interesting to note that the WCC Climate Adaptation Plan 2019-2024 does state its intention to appoint a Climate Action Officer and to offer remote working one day a week to WCC staff. There is a detailed commitment to drawing up a Transport policy for each of the 5 municipal districts within Co Wicklow and to achieve the top 3 priorities in each district within the 5 year life span of this section of the Climate Adaptation strategy. WCC also speaks of developing a Local Business Adaptation Plan which will look to providing employment locally without the need for lengthy commutes. There is to be a database of technologies helpful in reducing carbon emissions and a collaborative approach where communities are encouraged to help themselves.

The Council also outlines its intention to map and access wetlands, tidal levels, offset areas, to revise the Biodiversity Plan and to appoint consultants to plan for green corridors and against noxious species. There is to be a Food Strategy and a Steering Committee to dialogue with land and forestry owners. The 111 page booklet opens with an assessment of areas of risk and identifies issues around erosion and flooding as in need of urgent attention.

All of these measures are to be subject to an annual Report which the Council commits to producing.

Of course, it will be necessary to follow up on all of the above and to look into also all the many extra insights listed in the Survey's responses: to look at supporting the Pure Mile, to apply the Noxious Weeds Act, to deal comprehensively with the many forms of waste and also with plastic litter, to map & designate idle Council land for allotments, to join the EU Life Project on Biodiversity labelling and to incorporate into the Transport Plans sensible measures around footpaths and park'n ride parking.

One respondent has asked for a Biodiversity Officer to work with a Heritage Officer, so as to halt the steep decline in biodiversity. Another asks for each of the 5 municipal district areas to become a Conscious Community in its own right, to decide and act on the issues it identifies as the local priorities. There were several mentions of regenerating uplands, planned restoration of rain soak flood resilient features, the value of planting native trees and an end to clear felling, in combination with conservation of hedgerows. A green bridge is needed across the N11 linking the two sides of

the Downes Nature Reserve. There is an extensive Food Strategy Policy also outlined in a separate response. It was felt that at Claremont, Wicklow Campus and Carlow IT could be tasked with researching how to reduce Carbon emissions by the recommended EU minimum of 8% per year

To follow up on these, there is an opportunity for local groups & interested parties to engage with the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action SPC after each of their scheduled meetings. This is a useful opportunity to meet with the 6 Councillors working on the CABA SPC and to meet with the Council Environmental Officers and also the Representatives of various stakeholders in business, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, social enterprises and so on.

Connecting the Local to the Global

Working towards realising our community vision for wellbeing has a direct impact on achieving Ireland’s targets for the Sustainable Development Goals

