



Submission to An Garda Síochána Policing Plan 2022

By

County Wicklow Public Participation Network

October 2021



**Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe,
resilient and sustainable**

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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 379 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.

Consultation with Communities

Co Wicklow PPN invited community groups and individuals to a meeting entitled "Let's Talk About Policing, Safety & Security". This meeting took place online on 16th September 2021 and participants spanned the county's five Municipal Districts. The meeting began with information about the County Wicklow Joint Policing Committee as well as developments in the pilot Community Safety Partnership in Co Waterford. Following the presentation, participants were asked to consider two themes: Community Policing and Protecting People and invited to highlight issues along with possible solutions and benefits under these themes.

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. 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.

This submission is based on both consultations

Our Vision for Community Wellbeing and the County Policing Plan

As the Vision for Community Wellbeing relates to the Policing Plan the overwhelming vision of communities throughout the Municipal Districts is that:

“the County be a place where all citizens feel safe and secure in their community”.

The presence of more garda and a commitment to community policing were cited as factors that would contribute to a real sense of safety for people. The topic of safety/security came up under a number of the headings used in the development of our Vision for Community Wellbeing:

Environment & Sustainability:

- All citizens are socially connected within a safe and secure community. (Greystones MD)

Social & Community Development

- The needs, safety and security of all citizens, particularly the more marginalized are met (Arklow MD)
- Bray is a safe, inclusive nurturing community that promotes the potential of all its citizens.

Values, Culture & Meaning

- All citizens feel safe and secure in their community (Greystones MD).

Work, Economy& Resource

- Bray MD is a vibrant safe and environmentally sensitive place for business and people to thrive.

Participation, Democracy & Good Governance

Across the Municipal Districts groups sought to have a county where:

- local governance structures and procedures allow all citizens to contribute to the development of a county that responds to their needs,
- the voice of the community is valued and supported in local decision making and
- local government and community services are easily accessible and engage meaningfully with the people.

Community Policing and Protecting People

Issues	Solutions	Benefits
<p>Lack of Garda Presence, particularly in smaller rural areas and communities. Relevant to all Districts.</p> <p>Garda station opening hours and part-time services, leading to long waits for Garda presence when needed</p>	<p>Government needs to invest more in Policing services and increase Garda presence.</p>	<p>Sense of security.</p>
<p>Gardai on the Beat – not visible</p>	<p>The chatting bench was identified as a good initiative. A highly visible presence of Gardai on bicycles in Brittas Bay significantly reduced anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>More Garda visibility needed in all communities</p>	<p>Deterrent value of greater visibility</p> <p>A stronger liaison with local Garda</p>
<p>Gardai not known to local community</p>	<p>Local Garda Facebook Page/Community Alert Facebook Pages introducing Gardai</p> <p>More engagement with Community</p>	<p>More feedback from locals in social settings</p>
<p>Frequent changes in personnel negatively impacts on relationship building within communities and intelligence gathering.</p>	<p>Gardai should be enabled to live and form relationships in the communities they serve. They should be trained to interact and communicate with diverse communities.</p>	<p>Better relationship with Gardai – community feels safer</p>
<p>Lack of awareness of what the Garda role is within the community and of the solutions they have to offer</p>	<p>Community Liaison to inform all of their resources</p> <p>A focus on community policing.</p>	<p>Confidence in the Gardai as a whole.</p>

<p>Large gatherings with resulting Anti-Social Behaviour in local parks and community recreation areas.</p> <p>Increased & extensive anti-social behaviour, including damage to property, in Ashford. Young & older people being intimidated</p> <p>Damage to property/community resources</p> <p>Increased dumping and litter during the Covid pandemic.</p>	<p>Securing/Limiting access to the Public Park CCTV Cameras in the Parks/Problem areas</p> <p>More Garda presence and patrols on foot</p> <p>Neighbourhood watch patrols</p> <p>Community reporting of anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Community CCTV</p> <p>Consistent Garda service</p> <p>Adequate implementation of legislation and tougher consequences</p>	<p>Improve the quality of life of local residents Reduce local crime</p> <p>Deterrent – community feels safer Collaborative and united response</p> <p>Deterrent and useful for prosecutions and follow through</p> <p>Less cost to the community in repairing community infrastructure</p>
<p>Visibility of extensive alcohol consumption, drug dealing and drug use.</p> <p>Raves taking place in the mountains</p>	<p>Police presence</p> <p>Plain clothes (undercover)</p> <p>Designated drugs Gardai Education in Schools</p> <p>Highlight the work being done by the Drug & Alcohol Task Force. This support service works with people (including young people) and their families. These services need support & tolerance from communities</p>	<p>Less crime, more support for communities More support for people with addiction issues and their families</p>

<p>Illegal and Dangerous Parking Not enough Garda to implement the laws</p> <p>Increased use of electrical scooters on footpaths. These can't always be easily heard by older people who are more prone to accident</p> <p>Speeding on the N81 is extensive and dangerous. The road is significantly used by young children accessing the local GAA pitch and elderly neighbouring village residents.</p>	<p>Enforcement of by-laws. Proper marking of parking spaces Visual input by the Garda Allow CEW (Community Employment Workers) to issue tickets/fines</p> <p>Need legislation to tax and insure these like the requirement to insurance golf buggies.</p> <p>More traffic calming measures needed as well as traffic patrols and stronger fines.</p>	<p>Safety of Drivers and Pedestrians.</p>
<p>Need to consult with Community Action Leaders/Community Forums & Councils.</p>	<p>Twice-yearly meeting with Community Action Leaders at District Level.</p>	<p>Participation & collaboration of police service and community will result in better and more sustainable outcomes.</p>
<p>Supporting vulnerable individuals and communities</p>	<p>Training for Gardaí on interactions with those with disabilities and those who are neurodiverse, particularly when their difference is hidden and not immediately visible. Helpful to have training in use of simple unambiguous language and the use of visual supports when necessary</p> <p>Gardaí in some areas also have access to a database which includes children/young people on the spectrum who are known to abscond from time to</p>	<p>An empathetic service that deals effectively and efficiently with vulnerable people, supporting them and their families.</p>

	time. This means that a search can be mounted quickly and Gardaí alerted to keep an eye out. This is a welcome and useful initiative that should be rolled out in all areas	
<p>Improve the Focus of information on Text Alert</p> <p>Text Alerts - should be expanded - some areas have had it cut back.</p>	<p>Targets for minimum quantity of Text messages More Gardai involved in sending messages</p> <p>Should look at newer technology such as WhatsApp (as no cost to send messages), also should be nationwide funding of text alerts, rather than on a community by community basis</p>	Greater feeling of safety
Vulnerable older people living alone	Promote the Senior Alert Scheme in Co Wicklow and support community groups to register to run one in their local area	Greater feeling of safety for older persons and their families.
<p>Non reporting of crime/criminal behaviour</p> <p>Criminal intelligence – real fear of consequences of passing information to gardai</p> <p>Encouraging people to report crime, fear and feeling there is no point were identified as reasons why people don't</p>	<p>Communities feeling safe enough to facilitate more Community Reporting</p> <p>Higher visibility - important to reassure community, especially older people</p>	Trusting relationships between community & Gardaí
Lack of education in our schools and communities regarding drug awareness, road safety and civil and moral responsibility	Education by the local Garda through local engagement in schools and through community groups	To make a happier and secure community

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Co Wicklow PPN hopes that this submission is useful and that the issues raised and the possible solutions are considered in the new policing plan. A response to this submission can be Emailed to: countywicklowppn@gmail.com or posted to Co Wicklow PPN c/o CEART, Crinion Park, Wicklow Town.

Co Wicklow PPN looks forward to working with the Gardaí through our representatives on the Co Wicklow Joint Policing Committee