



**Submission to:**  
**The Draft Wicklow County Council Customer Service Strategy 2022**

**By**  
**County Wicklow Public Participation Network**  
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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 393 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 & Recreation Partnership, Co Wicklow Volunteer Centre, County Wicklow Partnership, South East Fisheries & Local Action Group, Ring a Link, Wicklow Heritage Forum, 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

Throughout, May 2022, Co Wicklow PPN in collaboration with Wicklow County Council held consultations across the 5 Municipal Districts of Co Wicklow, asking people "What is your vision for your community?" 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 purpose of these consultations was twofold:

- Inform the development of the new Co Wicklow Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)
- Prepare the new Co Wicklow PPN Vision for Community Wellbeing Statement. This document is used by the PPN to help to monitor and identify actions that can be undertaken by local and national government as well as by communities to work towards our shared vision.

We are currently documenting the responses we have received. To date, we have gathered information at 9 workshops (8 held in person and one held online) and

through an online survey. In total over 300 people have engaged with the consultation and many of these spoke as a representative of a community group.

This submission is based on:

- ‘Let’s Develop our Vision for our Community’ consultations (May 2022)
- ‘Assessing and making a submission to the Draft Wicklow County Development Plan’ poll at June 2021 Plenary and subsequent online survey
- PPN Vision for Community Wellbeing in Co. Wicklow developed in consultation with communities during 2018.

At the end of this submission, we have included a brief section on connecting Our Vision for Community Wellbeing to the Global Goals for Sustainable Development

Co Wicklow PPN hopes that this submission is useful to Wicklow County Council in the development of their Customer Service Strategy.

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As Our Vision for Community Wellbeing in Co. Wicklow (PPN 2018) relates to The Customer Service Strategy of Wicklow County Council the overwhelming vision of communities throughout the Municipal Districts is that:

***Transparent and accountable local governance structures and procedures allow all citizens to contribute to the development of a county that responds to their needs***

Communities in Co. Wicklow wish for a society where:

- All statutory and community stakeholders are collaborating and ensure that the voice of all people, and especially the more marginalised is heard.
- Grassroots development is encouraged supported resourced and uninhibited by the bureaucracy.
- local government is participative inclusive accessible and responsive to the needs of the community.

Across our recent community consultations (May 2022) from urban Bray and Greystones to the very rural parts of the Arklow and Baltinglass Municipal Districts peoples experience of Wicklow County Councils Customer Service was raised.

*We heard that ‘Communication’ presents a huge challenge for all agencies and communities.*

Specifically, in relation to Wicklow County Council, people and groups reported that they are continuing to experience issues in relation to the quality, method, and level of communication with the Council. We also heard of issues around accessibility and inclusion being encountered when dealing with Wicklow County Council.

Alongside the issues and concerns raised, a number of suggestions to help address challenges in relation to the provision of a quality customer service were suggested.

### **Linking What we heard from Communities with the key guiding principles of Wicklow Customer Service Strategy**

#### **Clear Communication**

Use of clear basic language - Plain English proof documents and communications.

Offer NALA plain English training for LA staff

Use a wide variety of methods of communication to ensure messages are reaching people.

In our PPN members poll & survey on making a submission to the County Development Plan we heard that:

<b>Q: How did you hear about the public consultation on the County Development Plan?</b>	
Through the PPN	60%
Other	8%
On social media	10%
In the Newspaper	8%
I didn't know that there is a public consultation on the County Development Plan	14%

Consider the provision of outreach clinics from different sections of the council to promote understanding & dialogue.

All communications receive a response this will provide more evidence that people are being heard and in the case of submissions, that consultation is being acted upon.

Better communication & understanding between different sections of the council before replying to public.

#### **Innovative Effective**

Many people welcome the digital (inc. online services and consultation hub) innovations in communications from Wicklow County Council, however, it should be borne in mind that

this can result in digital exclusion and isolation for many of our already marginalised communities. This issue highlights the need to use diverse methods of communication.

Further development of the Wicklow County Council Website: Simplify the website and make it more accessible for all including people with disabilities – people are reporting difficulties in accessing information on the website.

Use the library services to inform and support engagement with local authority consultations and plans.

### **Empathy/Respect**

Provide more opportunities for people to input and give feedback.

The employment of people from different cultures, ethnic and marginalized groups by the Local Authority would help develop empathy, respect, and engagement.

Better and more extensive timelines/time frames for community consultation and community input.

That the council be more responsive to issues raised by the public.

### **Equality/Diversity**

Cultural Awareness Training – for all Local Authority staff.

Trauma Informed Care Training – for all Local Authority staff

Workshops on Inclusion and diversity for staff

Access to services denied if you don't have the language – offer translated version/services

***All members of our society have equal access to all Local Authority services.***

***Clear, open, respectful, transparent and timely 2-way communication between communities and local government.***

Co Wicklow PPN hopes that this submission is useful to Wicklow County Council in the further development of the Wicklow County Council Customer Service Strategy 2022.

## The Sustainable Development Goals

The Global Goals, also known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are a **universal plan of action for people and planet** to be achieved by the year 2030. These 17 goals aim to end poverty, combat climate change and ensure that we p13leave peaceful, just and equal societies for future generations.

These goals are **universal** in nature, applying to developed and developing countries alike, and place sustainable development at their core.



## 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



