



## **Co Wicklow Public Participation Network**

### **Constitution**

1. Responsibility for approval of policy	<i>Secretariat</i>
2. Responsibility for implementation	<i>Resource Worker, Secretariat, Host</i>
3. Responsibility for ensuring review	<i>Secretariat</i>
4. Date of Adoption	<i>Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2022</i>
5. Date for Review	

# County Wicklow Public Participation Network

## **“The Voice of Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion Groups in County Wicklow”**

### **Summary**

County Wicklow Public Participation Network (PPN) was established in July 2014 as the representative voice for all Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion groups in County Wicklow.

The Public Participation Network will identify the issues that matter and try to influence policy in a way that improves the quality of life and opportunities for people within the county.

Membership of the Public Participation Network is open to all community and voluntary groups, clubs, and organisations in County Wicklow, working on a voluntary, co-operative or not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community.

The Public Participation Network is overseen by a Secretariat of 13 members elected by full member groups of the network.

The Public Participation Network elects representatives to committees and organisations to speak on behalf of all member groups of the network.

The Public Participation Network is the main link through which Wicklow County Council and other decision-making bodies in the county connect with the community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors.

County Wicklow Public Participation Network is committed to working in an open, inclusive, and transparent manner on behalf of all member groups.

**County Wicklow Public Participation Network**

**NAME**

The name of the organisation is County Wicklow Public Participation Network (PPN).

**MISSION STATEMENT**

County Wicklow Public Participation Network is the collective voice for all community and voluntary, environmental, and social inclusion organisations in County Wicklow, its purpose is to improve people's well-being by involving the community in local decision-making.

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF COUNTY WICKLOW PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK**

**The aims and objectives are as follows:**

- To provide an open, inclusive and transparent representative structure for all community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups in County Wicklow.
- To consult with the community so as to encourage and enable public participation in local decision-making and planning of services.
- To facilitate the selection of community representatives onto decision-making bodies and to support those representatives to be effective in their roles.
- To foster, in particular, the inclusion and empowerment of groups and organisations with a focus on tackling disadvantage and social exclusion including rural isolation.
- To support the member groups of County Wicklow Public Participation Network so that: they can develop their capacity to do their work more effectively; they can participate effectively in PPN activities; they are included and their voices and concerns are heard.
- To support a process that will feed a broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals from PPN member groups into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers.
- To facilitate opportunities for networking, communication, and efficient information exchange between environmental, community and voluntary and social inclusion groups and between these groups and Wickow County Council and other decision-making bodies.

- To ensure that the views expressed by PPN representatives are mandated by County Wicklow Public Participation Network member organisations.
- To promote and make known County Wicklow Public Participation Network and its aims and objectives, particularly to potential members.
- To develop and promote the Public Participation Network so that the work of the PPN is clearly recognised, acknowledged, and understood by local decision-making bodies and the PPN has a strong community voice within the county.
- To facilitate the development and achievement of a County Wicklow Vision for the well-being of this and future generations.

### **PRINCIPLES OF COUNTY WICKLOW PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK**

County Wicklow Public Participation Network and its member organisations are committed to the following principles and practices:

- Working with a community development approach to address issues of all our member groups and issues of social exclusion.
- Maintaining open, inclusive, and transparent organisational structures.
- Maintaining a Community Hosting arrangement for legal and employment operations of the PPN.
- Being accountable to the member groups.
- Acting as a vehicle to gather feedback and input into policies reflecting the diversity and range of views of member groups.
- Implementing and abiding by best practice governance structures.
- Working in a collective and supportive way with all member groups.

### **MEMBERSHIP OF COUNTY WICKLOW PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK**

Membership of County Wicklow Public Participation Network is open to any community and voluntary group or club, environmental group and any organisation addressing issues of social exclusion, working on a voluntary, co-operative or not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community within County Wicklow.

**Applications for membership will be ratified in line with:**

- The membership criteria by the Secretariat of County Wicklow Public Participation Network.
- Current national PPN guidelines in relation to all Pillars.

**County Wicklow Public Participation Network is made up of full member groups and associate member groups.**

**General Criteria for Membership**

- Groups should have at least five registered members.
- Member Organisations must align themselves with the aims, objectives and principles set out in Sections 3 and 4.
- Member Organisations must be volunteer-led (organisation may have paid staff but must be under voluntary control).
- Member Organisations must carry out their activities in an open and transparent manner.
- Member Organisations must have a base in and/or be active in County Wicklow.
- Member Organisations must complete and return a membership application form.
- Because of the separation of the functions of public representatives and the PPN, councillors, TDs, Senators, and MEPs should not be the primary PPN contact point for member organisations.
- An organisation's membership of the PPN may be reviewed by the County Wicklow Public Participation Network Secretariat if at any time the organisation claims to speak on behalf of/or represent the PPN without mandate.
- A member organisation shall cease to be a member of the PPN if the organisation no longer qualifies under the conditions laid down for membership.

**Full Membership Additional Criteria**

For full membership groups must be in existence for at least one year, have a committee, a governing document and hold an AGM.

Groups must submit a copy of their governing document (constitution) and minutes of their most recent AGM to the PPN.

**Associate Membership**

Organisations, which at the time of application, meet all the general criteria for membership.

Plus, the following list of specified organisations:

- Organisations that are based Outside the county but active in it.
- Organisations with a National Remit only (local branches can apply for full membership).
- Local Development Agencies.
- Organisations where the governance documents expressly provide for nominees to the Board/Committee by Wicklow County Council of either staff or elected representatives.

The following are not eligible for membership of County Wicklow Public Participation Network:

- State or semi-state bodies.
- Political Parties.
- Groups who have representation through other pillars of social partnership e.g., trade unions, farming and business organisations.

**Renewal of Membership (Refer to Re-registration Protocol)**

Member groups are required to re-register every 3 years.

**PLENARY MEETINGS**

The Secretariat of County Wicklow Public Participation Network will call at least one Plenary Meeting, open to all member groups, each year. This should be not later than 15 months from the preceding County Plenary. The County Plenary is the main decision-making body of the Public Participation Network.

Decisions made between Plenary meetings must be presented for ratification to the following meeting of the Plenary. Each full Member Group has one vote in the Plenary.

- Member Organisations must be given at least 21 days' notice of a Plenary Meeting.
- Notice of a Plenary Meeting should include details of any elections that will be taking place.
- Registration for meetings is mandatory and includes registration by members, Secretariat members and staff

6.1 The quorum for a Plenary Meeting shall be at least 15 per cent of the Member Organisations and also at least four of those present are members of the Secretariat. If a quorum is not available, those present may elect to proceed with either of the

following:

Option A

- The meeting should be postponed and rescheduled for a more suitable date, no later than one calendar month after the date of the original meeting.
- In the event that a quorum is not present at the rescheduled meeting, and provided that those in attendance consist of a simple majority (that is, half plus one) of all groups registered to attend the meeting, the number of participants present will be deemed to be the quorum and the meeting will be validly held.
- No objections to proceedings, including resolutions, ratifications and decisions, of the rescheduled meeting shall be permitted on the basis that there was no valid quorum in attendance at the originally scheduled meeting.

Option B

- Determine that the current attendance at the plenary is sufficient for the plenary to proceed. Decisions made at this plenary will be validly passed by a simple majority (that is, half plus one) of those in attendance.
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- In any event, if over 50% of the Secretariat Members' terms have expired by the date of the holding of the Plenary meeting, or the rescheduled Plenary meeting, whichever shall apply, the requirement that the quorum include four Secretariat Members will cease to apply.
  - An Extraordinary Plenary Meeting (EPM) may be called by the Secretariat or by notice in writing by 10 Full Member Organisations. At least 14 days' notice shall be given of an Extraordinary Plenary and the notice must contain a specification of the business to be discussed at the meeting.

***The PPN will hold at least one meeting in each Municipal District in any calendar year.***

## **SECRETARIAT**

County Wicklow Public Participation Network will be overseen by a Secretariat of 13 members elected by full member organisations at a County Plenary meeting (for further details on the election of the Secretariat refer to County Wicklow PPN Election Policy). The Secretariat is a flat structure (i.e. there are not elected officers). Meetings will be facilitated on a rotational basis. The PPN will strive to ensure a gender balance on the Secretariat.

The purpose of the Secretariat will be:

- To ensure the aims and objectives of the County Wicklow Public Participation Network are met.

- To ensure that member groups are informed of developments relevant to their groups;
- To represent member group' interests.
- To ensure the proper functioning of the PPN between Plenary meetings.
- To facilitate the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary.
- To support the Resource Worker to achieve the PPN's objectives through the implantation of the Annual Workplan.
- To develop County Wicklow Public Participation Network into an effective collective voice for community groups in the county.
- To engage with the PPN Representatives as laid out in the PPN Representatives Charter and Code of Conduct.

**SECRETARIAT MEETINGS**

- The Secretariat will meet every two months or as deemed necessary.
- The quorum for Secretariat meetings is half or more of the current members.
- If after 30 minutes from the scheduled starting time, a quorum is not present the meeting shall stand adjourned to a date to be determined by the Secretariat.
- If at an adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within 30 minutes from the appointed start time, the members present shall be a quorum.
- The Secretariat will strive to make decisions by consensus. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, those present will make decisions by way of a simple majority vote.
- Where possible all reports given at Secretariat meetings and general meetings should be written and circulated in advance.
- The secretariat has a responsibility to ensure that all decisions of the Secretariat meetings are recorded.

**SECRETARIAT SUBGROUPS (Refer to Co. Wicklow PPN Subgroup Terms of Reference)**

The Secretariat of Co Wicklow PPN may set up Subgroups. All Subgroups are required to report back and make proposals to the Secretariat who ultimately make decision.

***Sections 10, 11 and 12 of this Constitution should be read in conjunction with County Wicklow PPN's: Election Policy, Representatives Charter and Code of Conduct.***

**REPRESENTATIVES - CRITERIA AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

County Wicklow Public Participation Network elects representatives to sit on committees



and organisations on behalf of all member organisations of the network. To be eligible for election as a representative of County Wicklow Public Participation Network a person must meet the criteria set up in the PPN Election Policy.

**Representatives of County Wicklow Public Participation Network will seek to:**

- Promote understanding of the issues and difficulties facing the community sector
- Present the views and policies of County Wicklow Public Participation Network to the meeting and ensure that they are taken into account in the decision-making process.
- Bring issues of relevance to the community sector back to County Wicklow Public Participation Network for the information of all groups in the form of a written report.
- Advise County Wicklow Public Participation Network of issues which require a response, formulation of policy or other action.
- Receive support and guidance from County Wicklow Public Participation Network (through a Linkage Group/Thematic Network (see Appendix 2), Plenary meetings, or the Secretariat and the PPN Staff as to how the PPN should be represented.
- Attend County Wicklow Public Participation Network Plenary Meetings, relevant Linkage Group/Thematic Network (see Appendix 2) meetings and joint meetings between the Secretariat and PPN representatives.

**CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE SECRETARIAT MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE REQUIRED TO RESIGN THEIR POSITION****Secretariat Members and Representatives would be required to resign their position if they:**

- Are no longer a member of the County Wicklow Public Participation Network Member Organisation that nominated them.
- No longer have the formal support of their nominating Member Organisation.
- Declare as a candidate for local, general, Seanad or European elections;
- *Please refer to the County Wicklow PPN Code of Conduct for further details on circumstances where Secretariat members and Representatives could be required to resign their position.*

**ELECTION OF PPN REPRESENTATIVES & SECRETARIAT (refer to Co. Wicklow PPN Election Policy)**

- Co. Wicklow PPN Representatives including the Secretariat are nominated and elected by Full Member Groups.
- One seat on the PPN Secretariat is reserved for the hosting organisation.
- Depending on the Board or Committee and the specific seat there may be a different cohort of member group eligible to make nominations.
- A current list of County Wicklow Public Participation Network representative positions is available on the PPN Website.

**FINANCES (refer to Co. Wicklow PPN Financial Policy)**

***County Wicklow PPN is primarily funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and Wicklow County Council on an annual basis.***

- County Wicklow Public Participation Network finances will be overseen and monitored by the Secretariat and will be hosted by a County Wicklow Community Organisation with an agreed Memorandum of Understanding and in line with their financial policy, however the Secretariat shall operate robust financial controls with regard to all income and expenditure.
- True accounts shall be kept of all sums of money received and expended by the PPN and accounts will be made available to all members and stakeholders on a monthly basis.

**AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION**

- Any Member Organisation may put forward a motion to amend the Constitution.
- Motions to amend the Constitution must be made in writing to the Secretariat 14 days in advance of a County Plenary Meeting.
- Member Organisations must be informed of any motions to amend the Constitution at least 7 days in advance of a County Plenary.
- Motions to amend the Constitution must be discussed at a County Plenary Meeting and shall require a two-thirds majority of Full Member groups present and entitled to vote.
- The Secretariat will ensure that a formal review of the County Wicklow Public Participation Network constitution will take place at least every 3 years.