



# Public Participation Network Wicklow

Co Wicklow Public Participation Network

## Election Policy

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>24<sup>th</sup> June 2023</i>
5. Date for Review	

## **Introduction**

County Wicklow Public Participation Network elects representatives to sit on committees and organisations on behalf of all member organisations of the network.

This policy is provided to outline and document the way in which Co. Wicklow PPN nominates and elects its representatives.

## **Where the Policy Applies**

This election policy will apply for all representations of Co. Wicklow PPN, where it is deemed a member should act as the representative.

This includes the Secretariat and all other County policy and decision-making committees and boards that use the PPN Network to elect community members.

## **PPN Representatives Overall Principles**

The following principles apply to all Co Wicklow PPN Representative roles both on the PPN Secretariat and other County policy and decision-making committee or board that use the PPN structure to elect community representatives.

- Representatives are nominated and elected by Full member groups of the PPN.
- Nominees should be over 18 years of age.
- Depending on the Board or Committee and the specific seat there may be a different cohort of member group eligible to make nominations.
- Representatives are elected for a maximum term of three years, unless in exceptional circumstances the Plenary may decide on a shorter term.
- Representatives who are standing down at the end of the first term are eligible for re-election, however no person is eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same role.
- Representatives are nominated by Member Groups following an open and transparent nominations process. If, after a successful election, the original nominating body is dissolved and no longer exists, or the Representative is no longer associated with that nominating body, the Representative will be deemed to have stepped down from the role and a call for nominations will be made.
- County Wicklow Public Participation Network strives to achieve a gender balance on the Secretariat and amongst its Representatives.
- In order to preserve the independence of the PPN, current PPN Representatives cannot stand for election to any Government office, local, national or European, while remaining a Representative of the PPN. Once a Representative decides to stand for election to Government office, they must resign their position immediately before putting their name forward for nomination.
- If a Representative is unsuccessful in their bid to be nominated for election to

Government office, they must wait at least 12 months after the date on which they were advised that their bid for nomination was unsuccessful before seeking election as a PPN Representative.

- Should the Representative be nominated for election, but be unsuccessful in their election, they must wait at least 12 months after the date of the election before seeking election to any PPN Representative role.
- Should the Representative have been successfully elected, they must wait at least 12 months from the date their term of office expires before seeking election to a PPN Representative role.

Any queries in relation to the nomination and elections process can be emailed to [info@countywickowppn.ie](mailto:info@countywickowppn.ie).

### **Nomination Procedures**

Nominations for Co Wicklow PPN representative roles and seats shall be invited through; a notice on our website, social media, members updates and in a direct email to all member groups.

In this announcement Co Wicklow PPN will list the following:

1. Details of the Committee/Body the seat is on.
2. Details of which groups are eligible to nominate and vote (i.e., All Full members, Full members in a Specific Municipal District and/or PPN College/Pillar)
3. Requirements of the Committee
4. Requirements of Co. Wicklow PPN from representatives
5. Note on Nominee eligibility
6. Closing date for completed nominations not less than 14 days from announcement.
7. Checklist for those making a nomination (photo, bio, consent of nominee etc)
8. Details of the next steps.

An email reminder to member groups will be sent in advance of the closing date.

In the event of no nominations being received within the 14 day period the call will remain open and this 'nomination process' will be re-issued once a nomination is received.

### **Nominating Member Group Eligibility Criteria**

Depending on the Board or Committee and the specific seat there may be a different cohort of member group eligible to make nominations e.g., social inclusion members, area based members.

Nominating organisations must be **Full** registered members of the PPN, whose registration has not lapsed (have re-registered within the last 3 years).

Member Groups whose membership has lapsed should reregister/register within the notification period. It will be a matter for the Secretariat to decide if that Member Group can nominate.

Associate Member groups wishing to make a nomination should register as Full members within the notification period. Please note: As membership applications and changes in membership applications must be ratified at a meeting of the PPN Secretariat a change in membership status within the notification period may not be achievable.

### Nominee Eligibility Criteria

The following generic criteria applies to the nomination of people for PPN Representative positions:

- Nominee must be an active member of the group that nominates them.
- Elected representatives of Local Authorities cannot be nominated.
- A person who has been an elected representative of any level of Government (local, national, or European) cannot be nominated to represent the PPN in any representative role for one year after completing their term of office.
- Employees/ professionals - where there is a conflict of interest cannot be nominated.
- Nominees must meet the criteria of the body seeking representatives.
- A person who loses their mandate and who has not served the maximum total time allowed (6 years – 2 three-year terms of office) on a specific committee can seek nomination to the same seat/committee on a different mandate. However, their term of office is counted from their first election to the committee.
- A person who has completed 2 terms of office on the committee as a PPN Rep within the last 12 months cannot be nominated for a seat on the same committee, but they can be nominated for a seat on another committee/board.
- A person who has completed 2 terms of office on the committee as a PPN Rep more than 12 months ago can be nominated for a seat on the same committee.
- Other than PPN Secretariat membership, an individual should only represent the PPN on one board or committee. Individuals can be nominated for more than one seat (this could be on the same committee or different committees) but in the event of successful election to more than one seat they must choose the one seat to accept. The seat on the Board or Committee not chosen will then be filled by the nominee with the next highest number of votes (if applicable) or re-advertised for election by the PPN.
- Similarly current Representatives can be nominated for another seat but in the event of successful election they must choose the one seat to accept. It is preferable that a person would hold only one PPN representative role.

- The seat on the Board or Committee not chosen will then be filled by the nominee with the next highest number of votes (if applicable) or re-advertised for election by the PPN.

### Nomination Form

The Member Group must complete the relevant Nomination Form (see Appendix 1 for sample).

- All nominations must be received on the official nomination form.
- Only fully completed and correctly signed Nomination Forms will be accepted by the PPN.  
Nomination forms cannot be authorised by the nominee and therefore the group should authorise another member to sign off on the nomination.  
Nomination forms can be emailed to [info@countywicklowppn.ie](mailto:info@countywicklowppn.ie) in the first instance A hard copy must follow and be received at the Co. Wicklow PPN postal address: c/o CEART, Crinion Park, Wicklow Town, Co Wicklow within 5 working days of the close of nominations.
- The nominee must confirm on the nomination form that:  
  
They understand the role of the Representative, will abide by the Constitution of the PPN and the Representatives Charter and will act at all times to further the objectives of the PPN.  
  
They give permission to Co. Wicklow PPN to share the bio included on the nomination form.
- Late nominations will not be accepted.

### **Election Procedure**

Following the closing date for nominations, all nominations are reviewed and, if everything is in order, accepted by the PPN Secretariat.

If less valid nominations than seats are received, the PPN may:

- ask the retiring representative to continue in the position on an interim basis until a replacement is elected.
- Readvertise for election.

If the same number of valid nominations as available seats is received, the nominee(s) will be deemed elected by the Secretariat and ratified by the PPN membership at the Plenary.

If more valid nominations are received than seats available, an election will take place (see elections process details below)

In the event that a nominee is successfully elected for two seats they will be asked to choose one of the seats. In relation to the other seat the PPN may:

- Ask the successful Rep to sit on both committees on an interim basis.
- Fill the seat with the nominee with the next highest number of votes (if applicable)
- re-advertise for election.

These appointments would be approval by the Secretariat until the next Plenary or a valid nomination is received.

### Election Process

Should an election be required the following is the standard election process that Co. Wicklow PPN will follow:

Electoral System:

### Who Can Vote:

Only **Full** registered members of the PPN whose registration have not lapsed (have re-registered within the last 3 years) are entitled to vote.

Each eligible Full Member group is entitled to one vote.

Associate Member Groups cannot participate in elections.

All election materials will be sent by the PPN to the main (primary) contact person at the main email address provided by each Member Group on registration / re-registration. It is the responsibility of Member Groups to ensure that their contact details are accurate and up to date.

Elections will be free and accessible to all eligible Member Groups, in so far as is reasonably possible. It may, in some cases, be necessary to restrict elections, for example, to members of a particular College or Municipal District depending on the Committee or specific seat available.

Where restrictions are necessary, these will be transparent, with a clearly stated reason.

### Who is deemed elected:

The person with the most votes at the end of the count is deemed elected.

In the event that there are a number of nominees with an equal number of votes tied for the seat following the election process, the election process will be repeated for the winning tied candidates. In the event of a further tie the current facilitator of the Secretariat will have the casting vote. If there is a conflict of interest the previous facilitator of the Secretariat will have the casting vote.

This process gives the nominees or nominating member groups a chance to seek votes/represent themselves within the network again and also allows those who may have nominated or voted for another candidate to transfer their votes.

#### Election Materials Circulated:

Election materials circulated will include:

- An overview explaining what the election is for,
- who has been nominated (including their Member Group and Municipal District/College membership),
- full details on how votes are to be returned and the date for return of votes.
- A brief CV of each nominee, relevant to the election in progress (it is not intended that nominees will provide full career CVs).
- Where applicable (e.g., for email and postal voting) ballot papers may also be provided setting out how the vote should be cast (e.g., X, numerical preference etc.).
- Where applicable, a FREEPOST or stamped, addressed envelope for the return of ballot papers.

A list of the eligible voting member groups will be circulated to the Candidates. Contact details for the group will not be provided.

#### How will elections be held:

Elections may be held in either of the following ways:

- Via online form or postal ballot
- In Person at a PPN Plenary.

In person elections: All in person elections will be held as secret ballots.

Online elections: Name and group name will only be shared with the PPN workers for the purposes of ensuring compliance with the election process.

Via Online Form or Postal Ballot	In person at a PPN Plenary
Google Forms will be used for online elections. Hard copy Ballot paper can be made available as an alternative.	Information on the candidates will be circulated with the other papers to all member groups in advance of the Plenary.

<p>Should a group have a preference for or require a hard copy ballot paper they should request this from the PPN by email or phone call.</p> <p>A FREEPOST return or stamped, addressed envelope will be provided.</p> <p><i>Google Form/Ballot Paper questions will be:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Your Name</i></li> <li>2. <i>PPN Member Group's Name</i></li> <li>3. <i>Multiple Choice with Nominees' Name and nominating Group – the user selects one.</i></li> </ol> <p>At least one reminder will be sent to alert members near the election closing date.</p>	<p>Nominees are required to be in attendance at the Plenary to be included in the vote and will be invited to speak very briefly to the meeting.</p>
<p>The primary contact people of those groups eligible to vote receives the email with the voting link.</p>	
<p>A minimum of 10 days will be permitted for the return of online forms/ballot papers, unless circumstances require that voting is cast within a shorter timeframe and the Secretariat have made all reasonable effort to make sure that voting is accessible to all Member Groups.</p>	
<p>Co. Wicklow PPN receives the votes (both online and hard copy), checks the member group names against the PPN database and, if all is correct, the vote is accepted.</p> <p>If there are any issues the primary contact person for the particular group is contacted and clarification is sought.</p> <p>If more than one vote is received from a member group, they are contacted and asked to resubmit their chosen vote.</p>	<p>On signing in for the meeting member groups who are eligible to vote will be given a voting card. If a number of elections are due to be held different coloured cards will be issued for the different MDs and Colleges.</p> <p>Only one member from each member group will be given voting cards.</p> <p>A member group must have a representative present at the Plenary to cast their vote.</p> <p>A ballot box will be available at in person Plenaries for member groups to cast their vote.</p>



Hard copy ballot papers: once checked they are stored, in a locked box until the day and time of the count, as stated on the ballot information sheet.	
<p>The count will be conducted by at least 3 PPN Secretariat members with the Resource and Support workers present.</p> <p>The identity of the person/group who cast the vote will not be shared at the count.</p>	The count will be conducted at the Plenary by at least 3 PPN Secretariat members.
Results of online elections will be brought to the Secretariat for approval and brought to the PPN Plenary for ratification.	
<i>In the Event of a Tied Result</i>	
<p>A new notice period of 10 days for votes to be registered and a new online voting form and ballot paper with the names of only the winning tied nominees will be prepared and circulated.</p> <p>If the nominees are still tied after the second vote the current facilitator of the Secretariat. if no conflict of interest exists will have the casting vote. In the case of a conflict of interest the previous Facilitator of the Secretariat will have the casting vote.</p>	<p>The vote will be held again for the winning tied candidates at the Plenary. The Tied candidates will be given an opportunity to speak briefly to the meeting.</p> <p>If the nominees are still tied after the second vote the current facilitator of the Secretariat. if no conflict of interest exists will have the casting vote. In the case of a conflict of interest the previous Facilitator of the Secretariat will have the casting vote.</p>

Requests for clarification/information on the election process and/or count must be made by the nominating group not the candidate.

Co Wicklow may vary these processes to suit the needs of their Member Groups and the timeframes involved.

#### **Note on the Election of the PPN Secretariat:**

There are 13 seats on the Secretariat, which must be filled as follows:

- The Host organisation automatically qualifies for a seat on the PPN Secretariat.
- Full Member Organisations from each of the five municipal districts of the county elects a representative from their area (the municipal districts in Co. Wicklow are Arklow, Baltinglass, Bray, Greystones and Wicklow);
- Full Member organisations which operate on a county-wide basis, or across more than one municipal district elect one representative;

- Full Member Organisations from each of three electoral colleges: Community and Voluntary; Environmental and Social Inclusion elects two representatives;
- The Secretariat will be refreshed at least every 3-5 years to make sure that there is a balance between the need to have some members in place with the knowledge and understanding of the work that the PPN is doing and the need to make sure that the membership is properly represented. When the Secretariat is being refreshed, the longest-serving members must step down first to allow new voices to join.

### **PPN Representatives Subs Panel**

Co. Wicklow PPN operates a Representatives Subs Panel. All persons who are unsuccessful in a contested election, will be contacted in writing and asked if they wish to stay on a panel for the specific seat they sought election to for a period of **12 months**. Should the person who won the seat, for some reason be unable to continue in the role, the panel members will be asked if they wish to take up that seat. The subs will be approached in order of their place in the election result.