

Memorandum of Understanding

Between

Wicklow County Council of County Buildings, Whitegates, Wicklow Town

And

County Wicklow PPN (Public Participation Network) of CEART, c/o Crinion Park, Wicklow Town.

Purpose and Scope

To outline in a clear and unambiguous manner the roles and responsibilities of Wicklow County Council and Co. Wicklow Public Participation Network with regard to the delivery of the PPN structures and activities in accordance with all relevant Department Circulars and to ensure compliance with The Public Participation Networks Handbook by all parties and in particular with the following sections:

- PPN Handbook- Section 5 The Representatives
- PPN Handbook – Section 6 Secretariat
- PPN Handbook- Section 7 PPN Workers
- PPN Handbook -Section 8 Local Authorities

And with

- Wicklow PPN Representatives Charter - (Appendix 3)

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been signed between the host organisation, Wicklow Travellers Group Clg. and Wicklow County Council.

This covers the following:

- Funding and Financial Accountability
- Employment of PPN Resource Workers and a PPN Support Worker
- Accounting for and managing the work of the Resource Workers and Support Worker

Background and Context

A framework for public engagement and participation, called "The Public Participation Network (PPN)" was developed within each local authority area (engaging in and within municipal districts and at the County level) to enable the public to take an active formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the Local Authority's areas of responsibility.

The PPN is the main link through which the local authority connects with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors without prejudice to other consultation processes.

The aim of the structures and processes is to facilitate and enable the public and the organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system, not to reduce or homogenise this diversity. A parallel and equally important aim should be to facilitate the local authority in making better and timelier decisions.

Members of the local community interact with local government at different levels. The PPN facilitates input by the public into local government through a structure that ensures public participation and representation on decision-making committees within local government.

The Network performs its functions following core principles to facilitate active participation with decision-making bodies as identified earlier i.e. participation, trust, accountability, transparency and independence.

Goals and Objectives

To develop the Public Participation Network in Co Wicklow which:

- *Facilitates the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion and community & voluntary sectors on decision making bodies*
- *Strengthens the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion, and community & voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate*
- *Provides information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion and community & voluntary sector and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received.*

In particular the role of the Network will be:

1. *To contribute to the local authority's development for the County a vision for the well-being of this and future generations.*
2. *To facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between environmental, community and voluntary groups and between these groups and the local authority.*
3. *To identify issues of collective concern and work to influence policy locally in relation to these issues.*
4. *To actively support inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination, including Travellers to enable them to participate at local and county level and to clearly demonstrate same.*
5. *To encourage and enable public participation in local decision making and planning of services.*
6. *To facilitate the selection of participants from the environmental, social inclusion and community & voluntary sectors onto city/county decision making bodies.*
7. *To support a process that will feed the broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals of the Network into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers in areas that are of interest and relevant to the Network.*
8. *To work to develop the Environmental, Social Inclusion and Community & Voluntary sectors so that the work of the sectors is clearly recognised and acknowledged and the sectors have a strong collective voice within County Wicklow*
9. *To support the individual members of the Public Participation Network so that:*
 - *They can develop their capacity and do their work more effectively*
 - *They can participate effectively in Public Participation Network activities*
 - *They are included and their voices and concerns are heard.*

(Dept. Rural and Community Development & the Gaeltacht)

Roles and Responsibilities

- Wicklow County Council will deliver a Public Participation Network in its operational area.
- Wicklow PPN will take responsibility for the operational rollout of the PPN in Co. Wicklow.
- The PPN will be the primary route by which the Local Authority gets inputs for consultations with their communities, and community representatives on their Boards and Committees
- Wicklow County Council undertakes to provide a minimum of €35,000 matched funding to maximize the departments funding of €100,540.00, thus ensuring a minimum annual budget of €135,540 for the PPN
- Wicklow County Council undertakes to enter into a Service Level Agreement with Wicklow Travellers Group Clg. to host the PPN including the employment of PPN Staff.
- County Wicklow PPN with support from Wickow Travellers Group Clg and Wicklow County Council will take responsibility for the operational rollout of the PPN in Co. Wicklow
- Co Wicklow PPN will delegate one Secretariat member to act on its behalf with regard to the negotiation and progress of this MOU. Any change in these individuals must be communicated in writing to both parties
- The Director of Services, whose responsibility includes Community, or their appointed representative (minimum Administrative Officer level) will act on behalf of Wicklow County Council. Any change in this individual must be communicated in writing to both parties.

Workplan and budget

Co Wicklow PPN will:

- Devise an annual detailed Workplan which will clearly demonstrate how it will achieve the aims and objectives of the PPN within that period (Appendix 1)
- Identify the itemized budget and resource requirements under the Workplan (Appendix 2)
- In collaboration with WTG Clg, have in place a robust financial management and auditing system and financial reporting structure
- Have a clear reporting mechanism on key performance indicators and other items related to PPN activity

Wicklow County Council will:

- Agree the Workplan for 2026
- Agree a resource allocation for 2026 and a payment schedule based on satisfactory reports
- On receipt of a quarterly invoice from the PPN, pay travel expenses at revenue rates for PPN Representatives who attend meetings, including sub-groups, of Wicklow County Council Committees including the LCDC, SPCs, CSP, LSP, Wicklow Heritage Forum and subgroups of same.
- Appoint a liaison person between Wicklow County Council and the PPN who is at least at Administrative Officer level.

Staffing

Co Wicklow PPN and Wicklow County Council will through Wicklow Travellers Group Clg employ a the necessary PPN staff

Operational Co-operation

Wicklow Travellers Group Clg in collaboration with Co Wicklow PPN will

- Devise a job description and terms and conditions of employment for the PPN staff
- Act as the employer of PPN staff, taking responsibility for all relevant HR and Health & Safety matters, including having clear processes and procedures
- Undertake to pay all PPN staff, deducting all taxes and charges and paying them to Revenue
- Have employer's liability and other relevant insurances
- Participate in the recruitment of the PPN staff where appropriate
- Facilitate the provision of suitable workspace and equipment for PPN staff
- In collaboration with the PPN Secretariat, manage the day-to-day work of the PPN staff in the furtherance of the workplan.
- Offer support, supervision and relevant training and development opportunities to the workers through the HR committee.

Co Wicklow PPN will:

- Work constructively and collaboratively with Wicklow County Council in the furtherance of the aims of the Co. Wicklow PPN as set out in The Public Participation Networks Handbook (DRCDG, Dec 2020) and in accordance with all DRCDG Circulars in relation to the operation of PPNs
- Maintain an up-to-date database of PPN Member groups. This database will be the sole responsibility of Co Wicklow PPN and the information therein will not be shared with any other organisation without prior approval of the information giver.
- Through Wicklow Travellers Group Clg, take out suitable insurance policies as are required for its activities, and those policies will specifically indemnify Wicklow County Council
- Engage in other activities provided they are complementary to this Workplan and that they can access the extra resources required to undertake such work
- Work with Wicklow County Council on any funding applications which may be appropriate.

Wicklow County Council will:

- Support the development of a wellbeing statement at local and county level.
- Approach PPN for representatives for all seats on decision-making/advisory bodies under their auspices which require Environmental, Social Inclusion, or Community and Voluntary members
- Pay expenses to the PPN representatives on such structures according to a mechanism to be agreed with the PPN
- Work with the PPN to agree, adopt and implement a protocol for all committees/decision-making bodies with PPN representatives that will enable the representatives to engage fully, taking into consideration timing, location, documentation etc.
- Use the PPN as their main way of communicating with the Environmental, Social Inclusion and Community & Voluntary Sector, including formal consultations.

- Offer workshops and training as required to PPN members to build their capacity to feed into policies and plans
- Provide a designated official who will liaise with and support the PPN
- Work with Co Wicklow PPN on any funding applications which may be appropriate.

Reporting and Evaluation

Co Wicklow PPN will:

- Submit monthly reports to Wicklow County Council detailing progress on the workplan in accordance with agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Submit monthly financial reports to Wicklow County Council, through Wicklow Travellers Group Clg.
- Facilitate a quarterly review meeting with Wicklow County Council.
- Devise, agree and implement a participatory evaluation framework which involves all stakeholders in the PPN process
- Carry out Annual Reviews and produce an Annual Report on the PPN.

Wicklow County Council will:

- Submit reports to the Department as required to draw down funds
- Pay over approved funds to PPN in a timely way to enable them to discharge their responsibilities
- Participate in evaluation and monitoring of the PPN's performance

Conflict resolution

- Every effort should be made to avoid serious conflict between the parties by providing good communication protocols that will enable any issues to be dealt with early and in a timely manner
- In the event any dispute relating to this MOU cannot be resolved by settlement between the parties, the parties shall attempt to resolve all disputes through informal means.
- This may include mediation, arbitration, or any other procedures upon which the parties agree.
- Any dispute between the PPN and the Local Authority which cannot be resolved informally will be referred to mediation, facilitated by an independent mediator. The mediator will be chosen by agreement between the PPN Secretariat and the Local Authority.
- If no agreement can be reached in respect of a mediator, the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht will appoint an independent mediator. This will also apply to the appointment of any replacement mediator where the original mediator is conflicted from acting or cannot act for any other reason.
- In the case of mediation, the Local Authority and PPN will each pay half of the mediation costs and associated expenses, i.e. the PPN will pay its share of mediation costs and expenses from within its own budget and the Local Authority will pay its share from within its own resources.
- The Local Authority cannot deduct this amount from its allocation to the PPN.

Review

This MOU will be reviewed in writing every year on the anniversary of its signing. Any recommended changes must be agreed by both parties.

Commencement

This agreement will come into force on 01/01/2026 and be effective until 31/12/2026.

Signed 

Date 24/3/2026

On behalf of Wicklow County Council

Signed 

Date 24/3/2026

On behalf of County Wicklow PPN Secretariat

Appendix 1

Wicklow PPN
2026 Workplan

Goal 1: REPRESENTATION “The PPN delivers effective representation for the community and voluntary sector in County Wicklow.”			
Actions	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	Relevant Strategic Plan Objectives
Community Outreach including PPN Connect sessions	Ongoing	Min 10 event attended/organised Notes & Minutes from events	1.1 & 1.2 & 1.9
Processing New Membership applications	Ongoing	20 new members	
Re-registration of member groups	Q1	Sign off by Secretariat April	
Campaign to encourage associate members to become Full Member where appropriate.		5% increase in Full Membership	
Campaign to encourage groups to become members of the Environment Pillar		10% increase in Environment Pillar	
Networking & Consulting through our: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Members Survey • Secretariat, Monthly Reps meetings, Training sessions • Networks (MD & Environmental Networks) • And other ad hoc events/communications 	Ongoing	Member directed plans, submissions & representations.	1.2
Consultation/Focus groups/Research Submissions made	Ongoing	Record of all consultations shared and submissions made.	1.3

<p>Nomination & Elections run to elect PPN Representatives to County policy & decision-making committees & Boards</p> <p>Raising Awareness of role of PPN in representing the voice of community</p> <p>Meetings & collaborative work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wicklow County Council Committees (including DISC & SING) • Partnership Companies • Comhairle na nOg • Older Peoples Council • Other PPNs Regionally & Nationally • Dept. Rural & Community Development & the Gaeltacht • Other local groups and networks 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>All Rep seats filled within 6 months of vacancy.</p> <p>Rep Reports & Work Reports circulated.</p> <p>Record of meetings & joint actions.</p>	<p>1.4 & 1.8 & 1.9</p> <p>1.3 & 1.5 & 1.6</p>
<p>PPN Reps attending meetings & circulating reports</p> <p>Make Submissions on behalf of PPN membership</p> <p>Review & Evaluation with Reps</p> <p>Engagement with PPN SE Regional & National Workers Network, National Sect. Network, National PPN Housing Reps Network</p> <p>Make Submissions</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ad Hoc</p> <p>Min 2 per year</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Record of matters raised/ addressed and ultimate outcomes (Rep Reports, Work Reports, Submissions)</p> <p>Submissions made</p> <p>Report from Meetings</p> <p>Minutes of meetings & Submissions on nationally agreed positions.</p>	<p>1.3, 1.4, 1.5 & 1.6</p> <p>1.7</p>

Highlighting connection between policy and practice	Ongoing	Resources available & circulated.	1.9
Circulate Council MD Agendas	Monthly	Min 60 Agendas circulated	
Request agenda & minutes of meetings (from committees) on which PPN reps sit	Ongoing	Pre committee meetings for PPN Reps enabled.	
Work with KWETB & WCC to encourage engagement through National Voter Registration Day 30 April	Q3	Increase on the National Voter Register	
Reps Induction, Training & Support (Peer support locally, regionally and nationally)	Ongoing	Induction resources circulated & induction training provided Two Reps & Secretariat meetings held Rep reports shared	1.10
Continue to lobby for access to training provided to elected reps on the function of LAs & their committees.	Ongoing	Record of letters/submissions made.	

Goal 2: MEMBER SUPPORT “The PPN provides member groups with supports tailored to increasing their capacity and ability to achieve positive results for their communities.”			
Actions	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators	Relevant Strategic Plan Objectives
Annual Members Survey	Q1	Member direct training & supports.	2.1 (1.2)
Community Outreach	Ongoing	Record of member challenges faces, training & support needs	
Ad Hoc contacts, meetings and communications	Ongoing		(1.1)

Sect & Reps meetings	8 per year	Regular, comprehensive feedback from all member groups on their needs. Minutes of meetings	(1.2)
Hold 2 (min) in person training/information sessions	Q1 -Q4	2 (min) training Sessions held minimum. Resources shared and Receipt of positive evaluations on training	2.2 & 2.4
Provide access for member groups to avail of the Carmichael Training Programme on an individual level		Directory of all training on website Groups accessing up to 22 training sessions that suits their individual needs	
Continue to lobby individually and collaboratively for increased funding etc.	Ongoing	Secure increase in funding	2.3
Continue to highlight funding streams and opportunities.	Ongoing	Funding streams shared via News Update & social media Increasing range of supports made available.	2.4
Peer Support re funding applications.			
Continue to Support and Develop Networking Channels to ensure the voice of community is heard.	Ongoing	Record of Network meetings, events, actions & engagement with Reps	2.5 (1.2 & 1.5)
Continue to work with SING and actively support under represented marginalised groups	Ongoing	Minutes & Reports from SING	
PPN events will be organised to ensure presence in each MID over the year.	Ongoing	Records of meetings & events held	2.6 (1.1 & 1.9)
Re-registration of Member Groups 3 calls, 1 in Jan, Feb & March	Q1	April sign off by Secretariat	

GOAL 3: COMMUNICATIONS “The PPN maintains consistently excellent communications. It gathers and disseminates relevant information to all member groups, supports internal networking by member groups, representatives and secretariat members, and successfully promotes the role of the PPN and the work of its members.”

Actions	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators	Relevant Strategic Plan Objectives
Produce & Circulate Regular News Update	Ongoing	Min 24 News Updates (including feature articles/editions)	3.1
Social Media Posts	One per working day	Active Social Media pages	
Current information on website	Ongoing	Website up to date	
Press release & articles	One each quarter	Record of articles	
Radio coverage	Ad hoc	Record of radio coverage	
Develop promotional tools to support PPN Reps to communicate the PPN message and encourage groups to engage	Q4	Resources developed	
Build relationship with local media providers	Ongoing	Regular slot in local media	3.2 & 3.3
Community Outreach events	Ongoing	Min 10 events attended/organised Increase PPN membership by 20	3.3 (1.1 & 1.2)

GOAL 4: GOVERNANCE/OPERATIONS “The PPN is fully compliant with all governance requirements and demonstrates best practice in its operations.”

Actions	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators	Relevant Strategic Plan Objectives
HR subgroup Meetings	Quarterly	Minutes of meetings	4.1
Support & Appraisals	Annual	Successful staff appraisals	
Weekly staff meetings for updates & handover	Ongoing	Efficient staff team	
Hold 2 – 3 externally facilitated staff support, reflection, & development sessions	Q1 – Q4	Strong resilient staff team	
Develop staff induction & skill sharing resources	Q1 – Q4	Resources to support continuity & PPN resilience	
Collaborate with other PPNs	Ongoing	Record of meetings & actions taken	
Continue to lobby	Ongoing	Record of actions & responses	4.2 (2.3)
Policy Subgroup Meetings	2 meetings min	Minutes of meetings & Policy documents	4.3
Develop a Schedule of Policy development & review	Q1	Schedule developed & implemented	
Meet Governance requirement & Complete compliance checklist	Ongoing	Compliant with PPN Handbook	
Lobbying Returns	Quarterly	Record of Lobbying Returns	

<p>Secretariat & Subgroup meetings</p> <p>Plenary meetings</p> <p>Prepare Work and finance reports</p> <p>Review of actions</p> <p>Sharing and documenting procedures in a PPN Procedures Handbook</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2 per year 24 May & 29 Nov</p> <p>Monthly/Annually</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings</p> <p>Minutes of meetings Reports</p> <p>Record of Review & Minutes of meetings</p> <p>Handbook developed</p>	<p>4.5 & 4.3</p>
<p>Development & Distribution of PPN resources</p> <p>Community outreach</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Resources developed and distributed.</p> <p>Increased membership</p>	<p>4.6</p>

Appendix 3

Responsibilities of the PPN to the Representatives

Representatives are Co Wicklow PPN's most valuable resource and our organisation aims to encourage and support them in their role by:

- Ensuring that Representatives are provided with an induction to the PPN
- Providing training for representatives where possible.
- Be familiar with the Representatives and the role of the Committees and Groups that they have representation on.
- Listen to the issues raised by Representatives and respond promptly to these issues.
- Take the time to read, understand and respond to communications that are received in relation to the PPN.
- Consult directly with the Representative, or through the Linkage group/Thematic Network, to discuss any matters to be raised at meetings.
- Ensure that Representatives are advised directly, or through the Linkage Groups/Thematic Network, of any consultations or issues the PPN or Secretariat is undertaking.
- Treat all Representatives in accordance with the PPN's Policies and adhere to the PPN's Charter.
- Provide the Representative with a clear indication of decisions made that might impact on their work on behalf of the PPN.
- Ensure feedback from Representatives is shared with PPN member groups.
- Co Wicklow PPN will ensure that Representatives receive out of pocket/travel expenses to enable them to participate in committees they were elected to as per the Co Wicklow PPN Financial Policy.

Responsibilities of Committees to the PPN Representatives

- Recognise that PPN Representatives are there to represent a diverse range of community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental groups in the county.
- Provide a briefing to all members of the Committee or Group on the role of the PPN and its Representatives.
- Treat PPN Representatives with respect and equally involve them in the work and decision-making of the Committee or Group.
- To hold at least some meetings at times, dates and locations that facilitates the participation of volunteers. Ideally these dates should be set annually.
- To provide the PPN Representatives with an induction to the Committee or Group clearly outlining the Terms of Reference for the Committee, Committee Standing Orders, how to have issues put on the agenda etc.

- Work collaboratively with PPN Representatives to ensure that they have an opportunity to input on matters and issues that they are there to represent.
- Provide Minutes and Agendas for meetings at least two weeks in advance of meetings to allow the PPN Representative an opportunity to gain input from the PPN/Linkage Group.
- To offer relevant training to PPN Representatives and to provide support to them in interpreting technical documents.
- Ensure that any conflict of interest are clearly stated and dealt with appropriately
- Produce an agreed meeting outcome document at the end of each meeting which can be shared with the PPN membership.
- Be familiar with and adhere to the PPN's Charter and Policies with regard to Representatives.

Responsibilities of Representatives

- To be committed to the aims, objectives and principles of County Wicklow Public Participation Network.
- Be willing to be representative of the PPN as a whole and to advocate for the PPN, Secretariat and Linkage Group/Thematic Network.
- Ask for support or backup when needed.
- Be willing and able to attend meetings of the relevant Committee or Group that they sit on.
- Take the time to read, understand and respond to communications that are received in relation to the PPN and the Committee or Group.
- Be willing and able to engage with the PPN/Linkage group/Thematic Network for consultation and identification of issues either through meetings, electronic or other means. Ensuring that there is an agreed record of relevant discussion and all decisions.
- Ensure that any conflict of interest is clearly stated in relation to discussions and decision making on committees.
- Clearly indicate whether feedback provided reflects a factual view of the meeting or a personal view.
- Recognise that the Linkage Group/Thematic Network or PPN is the decision-making body and that decisions may conflict with their own opinion.
- Provide a brief written report from each committee meeting they attend on the PPN's behalf. The report should provide a brief synopsis of any discussions at the meeting and the resulting decision using the PPN Reporting Template.
- Where there are multiple PPN Reps on one committee, a commitment should be made to meet prior to the meeting, to rotate the reporting responsibility and to ensure that the report is approved by all Reps prior to further circulation.
- Have due regard to issues of confidentiality when reporting from meetings.
- Ensure that the Resource worker is kept informed of all meetings attended and reports issued.
- To be readily contactable by members of the PPN, through the Resource Worker.
- Adhere to the PPN's Charter and Policies.