

# Draft WESTMEATH PPN STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-25





# WPPN Overall Strategic Goal

**That Westmeath PPN is an integral and respected local decision-making partner and network. It is engaged and pro-actively consulted in the development of all Westmeath community, social, economic and infrastructural policies. Its members are well supported and aware of their ability to make a difference for their community.**



Westmeath Public Participation Network (WPPN)  
Community Development Section,  
Westmeath County Council, Áras an Chontae, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, N91 FH4N

Direct Line: **044 9332157** – Email: **info@westmeathppn.ie**  
Website: **www.westmeathppn.ie**

**Westmeath PPN Resource Worker** Brigid Geoghegan  
**Westmeath PPN Support Worker** Ursula Harper

# Westmeath PPN Overall 5-Year Strategic Vision/Goal:

That Westmeath PPN is an integral and respected local decision-making partner and network. It is engaged and pro-actively consulted in the development of all Westmeath community, social, economic and infrastructural policies. Its members are well supported and aware of their ability to make a difference for their community.

The overall strategic goal will be achieved through 5 strategic areas and 17 strategic actions

## Five strategic areas:

1. Improving our Network
2. Improving our Communications
3. Improving our Membership Supports
4. Improving our Representation
5. Environment & Sustainability

1	2	3	4	5
Improving our Network	Improving our Communications	Improving our Membership Supports	Improving our Representation	Environment & sustainability
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Operate the network to the highest possible standard.</li> <li>2. Develop working Linkage / Thematic Groups.</li> <li>3. Grow Westmeath PPN membership in a planned and sustainable way.</li> <li>4. Increase the operational capacity of the PPN.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Develop communications.</li> <li>6. Showcase our achievements.</li> <li>7. WPPN will work to communicate clearly and concisely to its members &amp; the wider public.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Provide a range of training supports.</li> <li>9. Create more networking opportunities.</li> <li>10. Sharing opportunities and supports for PPN Representatives.</li> <li>11. Develop methods to make the PPN more understood and accessible to all.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Progress the PPN as a mandatory consultative and participatory structure.</li> <li>13. Foster key partnerships and explore further public participation initiatives.</li> <li>14. Further develop relationships between the PPN relevant agencies, organisations and Public Representatives.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15. WPPN will operate in an environmentally sustainable way.</li> <li>16. WPPN will actively try to positively influence policy on issues such as Climate Action.</li> <li>17. WPPN will strive to encourage our members to conduct their activities in a safe and environmentally responsible manner.</li> </ol>



# Preface – PPN Secretariat (for 5-year Strategic Plan 2021-2025)

The Secretariat of Westmeath Public Participation Network (WPPN) is delighted to present this Strategic Plan for the period 2021 to 2025. This plan sets out the next phase of development for the PPN in Westmeath. We are heartened and grateful to note that almost 280-member organisations of the PPN engaged in this process, which we feel, provides us with a strong mandate on our priorities for the coming five years.

Westmeath PPN was setup as part of Local Government Reform in late 2014 as an evolution of the previous community and voluntary forum structure. We first elected a Secretariat to lead and oversee the operations of the PPN in 2015. The Secretariat then developed annual work plans from 2016 to 2020 that brought us through an intense but rewarding period of structuring of the PPN in Westmeath. The results of this can be seen today through the wide variety of organisations and individuals who attend our Plenary & Municipal District meeting and also avail of our training workshops, participate in and volunteer as PPN Representatives, contribute to consultation submissions and contribute in so many ways to Westmeath PPN.

It was a pleasure to work with so many PPN members in creating the Community Wellbeing Vision for Westmeath; a document which has influenced greatly the direction of this 5-year strategic plan. We would like to acknowledge and thank all WPPN members, resource worker, support worker and secretariat members for the commitment, passion and imagination they brought to this process.

As a PPN, we have an obligation to promote and facilitate meaningful citizen participation and engagement in local decision-making structures. Our commitment to this is matched by our aspirations for the PPN through our overall Strategic Goal, which is:

**That Westmeath PPN is an integral and respected local decision-making partner and network. It is engaged and pro-actively consulted in the development of all Westmeath economic, social, community and infrastructural policies. Its members are well supported and aware of their ability to make a difference for their community.**

We are committed to working with the community & voluntary, environment and social inclusion sectors to support organisations to contribute positively to their own communities and to the County of Westmeath. We are also committed to engaging as an equal partner with decision makers at both local and national level.

We wish to acknowledge the significant on-going support of Westmeath County Council and the Department of Rural and Community Development to the PPN structure and look forward to growing and strengthening this into the future.

Finally, we would like to thank all Westmeath PPN member organisations that have shown enormous support to the PPN to date and look forward to working with them on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

**Westmeath PPN Secretariat 2020:** Anne Drury, Catherine McEntee, Dave Raftis, Hugh Farrell, John Mangan, Kevin Brady, Margaret Kiernan, Maureen McCormack

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# Introduction

## Overview

Westmeath Public Participation Network (PPN) is the local Public Participation Network. The PPN provides a structure for a two-way flow of information and engagement between Westmeath County Council and Community, Environment and Social Inclusion groups. The PPN also provides opportunities for the capacity building and growth of its member organisations. This strategy outlines how the PPN can work together with local agencies and democratic decision-making processes to ensure that local policy making includes and is beneficial for Westmeath communities. The strategy has been developed by members of the PPN.

This strategic plan begins with an overview of the PPN, its mission, values and structures as well as its key achievements to date. This plan provides a profile of Westmeath PPN and outlines key demographic information about the Westmeath area. The steps undertaken to develop the plan are outlined. This is followed by the PPN Wellbeing Statement, which provides an overriding vision for what the PPN is working towards. Following this the plan outlines 17 actions across four strategic areas, which relate to how we operate, and how we communicate, represent and support PPN members. The final sections of the plan outline how we will support the plan to be implemented and how the activity of the PPN has incorporated the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

## PPN Vision, Values and Principles



### Vision

*The Vision of Westmeath Public Participation Network is to 'act as the voice of the Community in Westmeath and to influence improved decision making in the county'.*



### Values

**The Westmeath PPN is underpinned by the values of:**

- Inclusiveness and Participation
- Independence and Diversity
- Accountability and Transparency



### Principles

**Westmeath PPN operates under the principles of:**

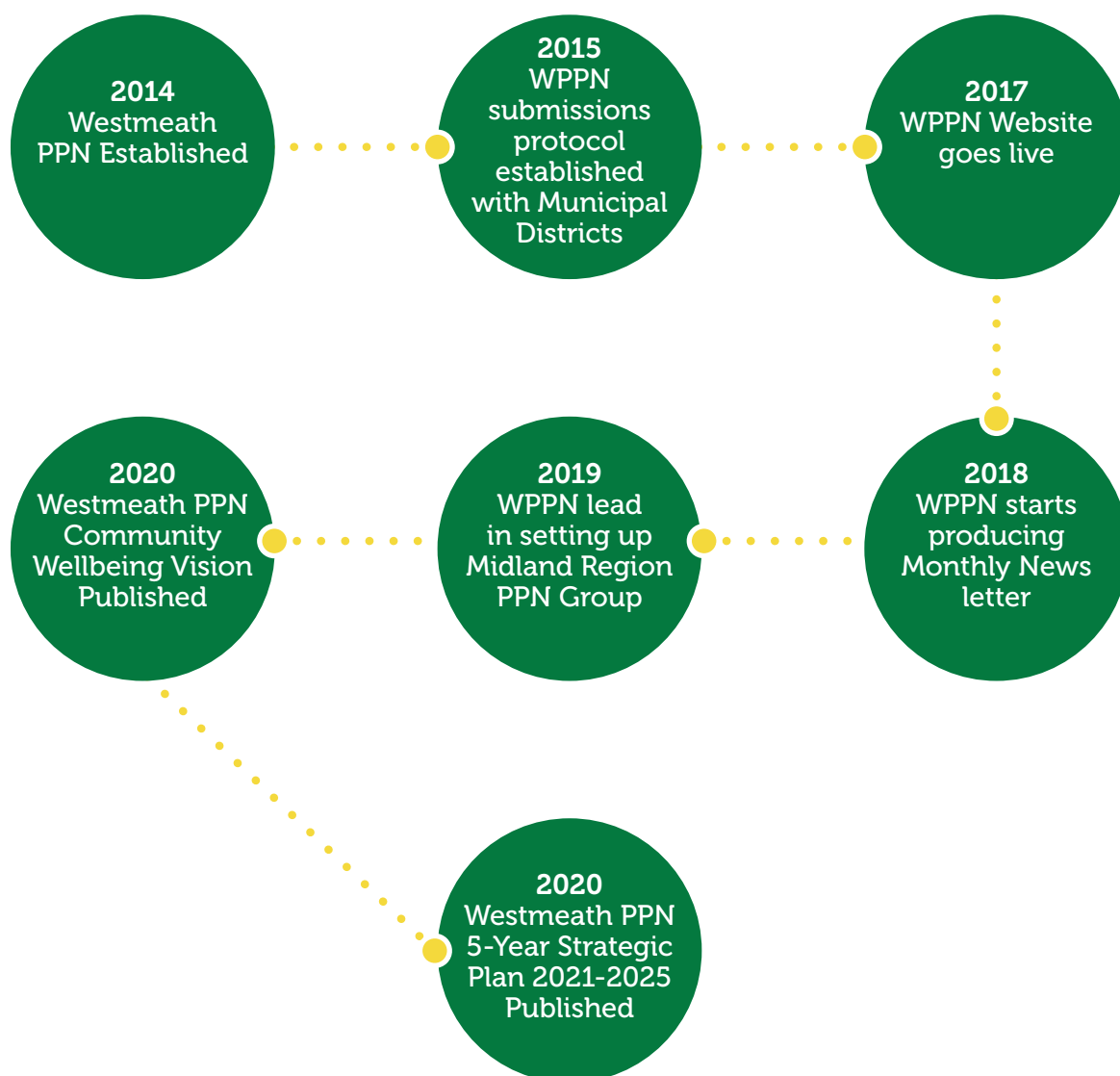
- Clarity – of role and structure
- Commitment – to our members and the integrity of the organisation
- Communications – to be in a clear, concise, simple and timely manner
- Consistency – of service and a clear mechanism of two-way engagement



# Overview of the Role of Westmeath PPN

The PPN is a countrywide initiative to build a network of community, social inclusion and environmental groups who work within a local authority area. The focus of the PPN is to empower and assist groups to participate in local decision making. The PPN is key to Westmeath's framework for public engagement. It provides the structure to facilitate the two-way engagement between Westmeath County Council and Community, Environment and Social Inclusion groups. The network enables residents of Westmeath to influence plans and policies for the future development of the County through their local community organisations.

## Timeline of Westmeath PPN - Key dates & Successes



# How the PPN Works with National and Local Policy

The PPN was setup as part of Local Government reform in 2014. This was on the foot of a 2013 recommendation by the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government. The recommendation was set out to achieve the aim of more extensive and diverse input by citizens into the decision-making process at local government level. Since their establishment PPN's are the primary means of Civic Society to engage with County Councils. PPNs are joint- funded through the Department of Rural and Community Development in partnership with the local County Council, in this case, Westmeath County Council.

## National Level

The PPN User Guidebook 1 states that the PPN is to function as **“the main link through which the Local Authority (LA) connects with the community, voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors”** and **“enables the public to take an active formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the LA's area of responsibility.”**

The intention is to achieve local representation through a collaborative partnership approach. Positive relationships between PPN and the LA are essential for the success of this. Each PPN and LA draws up a clear memorandum of understanding to govern their operations, funding and independence.

The Irish Government is committed to the continuation and development of PPN. The Open Government Partnership National Action Plan 2016-2018, commitment 22 is to support PPNs through the operation of the National PPN Advisory Group (NAG). The NAG is charged with advising and supporting the Department in the development of PPNs. The membership of the NAG is made up of representatives from the Department, sectorial interests, PPN volunteers and PPN workers, which are the Westmeath PPN Resource Worker and Support worker.

## The role of the National Advisory Group is to:

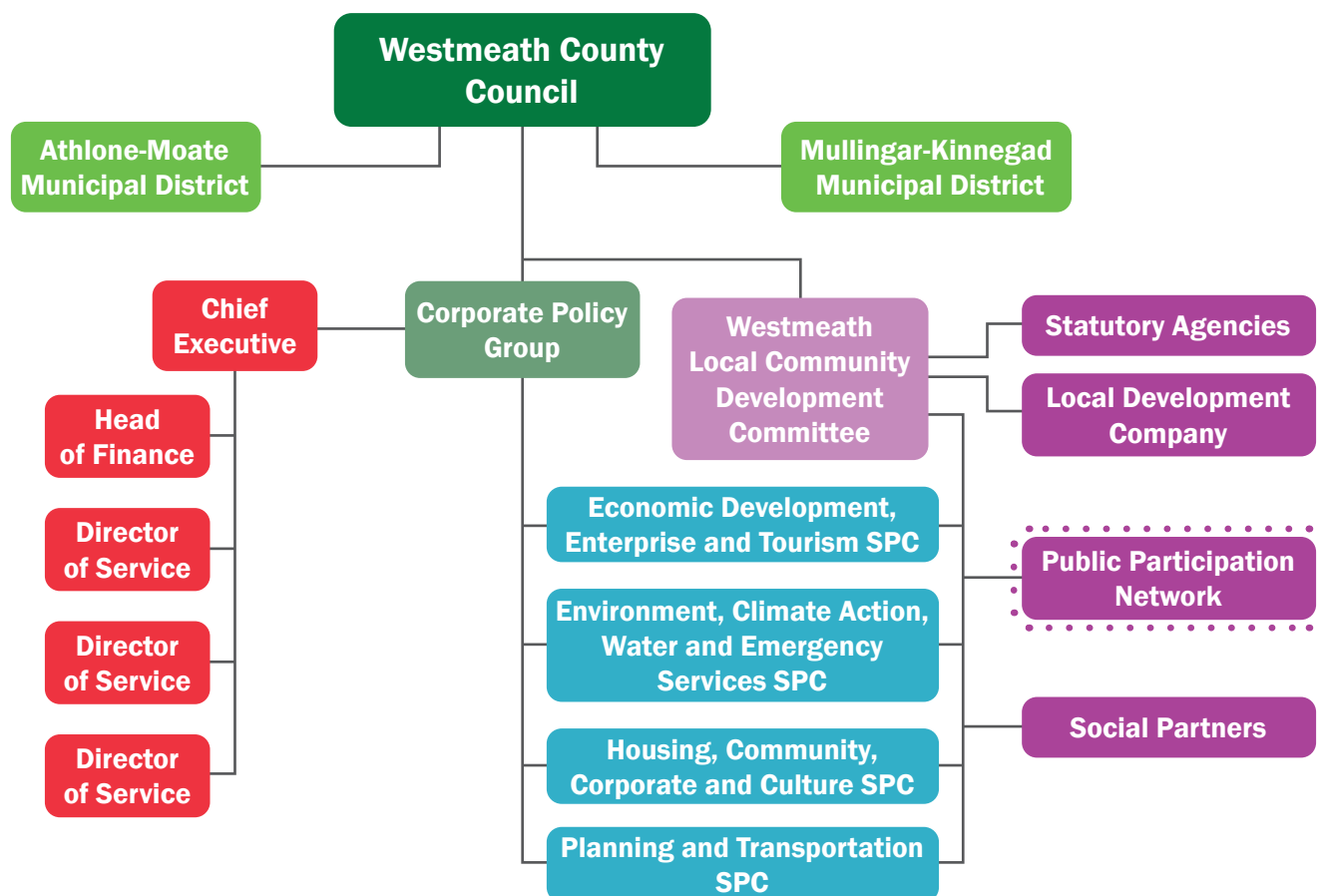
- Engage with all stakeholders, including other PPNs, community-based PPN member organisations and local authorities to promote best practice
- Update and improve the PPN User Guide
- Continue on-going training/capacity building programmes for local PPN participants
- Roll out a capacity building programme for LA members and officials
- Develop a national communications/awareness-raising plan for PPNs
- Roll out and update as necessary a county register of member organisations

## Local level

At local level the PPN is embedded in Westmeath County Council through its Corporate Plan 2020-2025. This plan provides a framework within which annual service delivery plans set out the principal service objectives and priorities for each functional directorate. As part of its community services section it states that, **“The Council will lead community participation through strengthening and supporting the Public Participative Network (PPN) and local representation on Strategic Policy Committees (SPC), Westmeath Joint Policing Committee (JPC) and Westmeath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). ”** **“To facilitate the broadest possible participation by citizens in local decision making including the development of their communities and their county.”**

## Organisation Structure

The overall organisation structure of Westmeath County Council may be shown diagrammatically as follows -



# Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)

Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) are local authority committees whose membership includes elected councillors, representatives of business, farming interests, trade unions, environmental/conservation groups, community and voluntary services and members of the PPN.

It is the task of the Strategic Policy Committees, to advise and assist the council in the formulation, development and review of policy. Westmeath County Council contains four, which are:



To align with the SPC's Westmeath PPN plans to create similarly themed Linkage Groups; open to all members of the PPN. These Linkage Groups meet quarterly and discuss issues of concern to the community. These groups provide the two PPN members who represent them with a mandate for their engagement in the SPCs.

## Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)



Five members of the PPN sit on the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and contribute on behalf of the network to the Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).





## Joint Policing Committee (JPC)

There are also six members of Westmeath PPN who sit on the Joint Policing Committee (JPC) and contribute on behalf of the network to the Westmeath JPC Six Year Strategy.



**In total Westmeath PPN has 34 volunteer Representatives on the following structures/committees.**

- Local Community Development Committee - LCDCC
- Joint Policing Committee - JPC
- Environment, Climate Action, Water and Emergency Services SPC
- Housing, Community, Corporate and Culture SPC
- Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism SPC
- Planning and Transportation SPC
- Midland Region Drugs & Alcohol Task Force - MRADTF
- Westmeath County Childcare Committee
- Westmeath Community Development incl Volunteer centre
- Westmeath Heritage Forum
- Westmeath Music Generation
- Westmeath Regional Sports Centre
- Westmeath Road Safety Forum
- Westmeath Age Friendly Council
- Westmeath Water Monitoring Committee
- Money and Budgeting Service - MABS
- Westmeath Sport & Recreation Forum



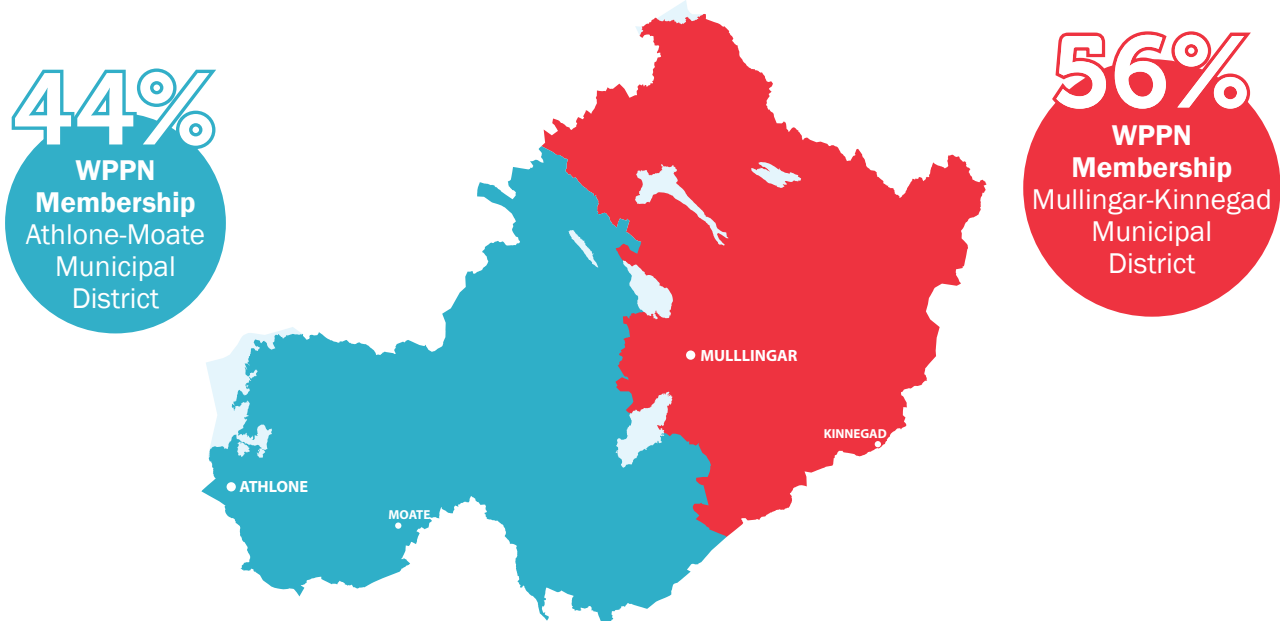
# WPPN Membership Profile

**Membership Numbers:** The PPN is made up of over 740-member groups/organisations which between them contain an estimated 30,000+ individual members.

**Municipal Districts:** Almost 56% WPPN membership are in the Mullingar-Kinnegad Municipal District with 44% of WPPN memberships in the Athlone-Moate Municipal District Area.

More than eight in ten member groups have a committee structure, with 8% being associations.

Over half of WPP membership groups describe their primary concern as being either sports/outdoors, youth/older people, residents' associations, arts/culture or heritage/environment.



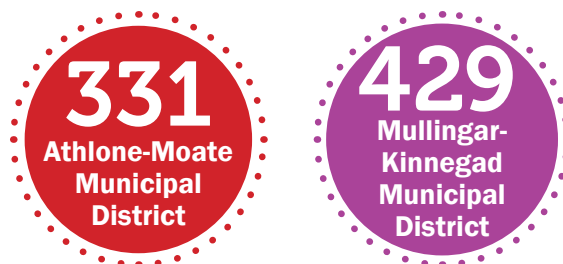
## WPPN Groups by Pillar



## WPPN Groups by year



## WPPN groups by Municipal District



**Number of members/  
volunteers in PPN  
affiliated groups  
approx. 30,000+**

# Westmeath Demographics



## Population By Town

Town	Population
Athlone (Monksland/Bealnamullia)	21,349
Mullingar	20,928
Castlepollard	1,163
Moate	2,763
Kinnegad	2,745
Kilbeggan	1,199

## Top 3 Non-Irish Nationalities in Westmeath



## Population of Westmeath

88,770

## Average Age of Population



## 31,813 Private Households in the county

Average no. of persons per household 2.8



## Population By Geographical Area

48.9% living in town



51.1% living in rural area

## Total persons living alone in the County in 2016 was 7,482



i.e. 8.5% of all those living in private households

## 11,370 aged 65 and over in Westmeath



## Average disposable income of €18,430



the highest average in the midlands

## 87% of the Population recorded as having good and very good health as per the latest CSO figure



## WHERE WE WORK

34,935 persons resident in the county who were 'working'

A total of 4,786 businesses in Westmeath\*

5,154 Wholesale and Retail Trade

14.6%

4,203 Health & Social Work

11.9%



4,085 Manufacturing

11.6%



3,118 Education

8.8%



2,223 Public Administration & Defence

6.3%

\*CSO 2017

Average travel time of commuting workers

28.8 minutes



**WALKED**

8.4%



**USED PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

3.6%



**TRAVEL BY CAR**

72.9%



**CYCLED**

1.4%

**GETTING TO WORK**

## EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

13.9% Primary

16.4% Secondary (lower)

30.9% Secondary (upper)

38.8% Third Level



**census 2016 RESULTS**  
www.cso.ie

# The Development of WPPN 5-Year Strategic Plan

## Purpose

The strategic plan's key purpose is to orientate the PPN's systems and resources in a common direction in order to achieve the agreed goals. The strategic plan will also assist Westmeath PPN in further establishing credibility as an organisation and expanding the scale and scope of work conducted by the organisation.

## How and Who

**This strategy was developed by members of the PPN who contributed in four main ways:**

- (i) Online Consultation in 2019
- (ii) Consultation at the September 2019 Plenary meeting
- (iii) Engaging with PPN Secretariat & PPN Representatives to identify strategic issues and actions
- (iv) Consultation & Feedback from Community Wellbeing Vision Consultation Workshops & online consultation

**WPPN 5-Year Strategic Plan was drafted – and this draft approved at Secretariat level**

- (v) The Plan was then put out for consultation to the full membership (Plenary)
- (vi) Following the plenary consultation & feedback from members

This final draft was created and approved by the Plenary.





# Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice.



In September 2015, Ireland was one of the 193 Members States of the United Nations (UN) who adopted these goals. The Goals interconnect and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve each Goal and target by 2030.

Governments have primary responsibility for implementing the SDGs, but the Goals do not belong solely to governments. The Goals belong to everyone, in every community, in every country across the world. To achieve the SDGs, governments, businesses, communities and individuals will all have to work together. Everyone can contribute to that work, from businesses adopting sustainable corporate strategies, to communities working together to improve their local environment, to the individual choices we all make as consumers.

For this reason, Westmeath PPN have identified how its Community Wellbeing Vision & 5-year Strategic Plan 2021-25 links with the shared goals and have identified for each wellbeing “domain” or aspect which, Sustainable Development Goal is being progressed with the vision.

# How WPPN Community Wellbeing Vision and 5-Year Strategic Plan links into Sustainable Development Goals



# Overview of WPPN 5-Year Strategic Plan and Key Areas of Work 2021 – 2025

## Overall strategic goal:

***That Westmeath PPN is an integral and respected local decision-making partner and network. It is engaged and pro-actively consulted in the development of all Westmeath community, social, economic and infrastructural policies. Its members are well supported and aware of their ability to make a difference for their community.***

Our overall strategic goal will be achieved through 17 strategic actions, under the following five strategic areas:

1. Improving our Network
2. Improving our Communications
3. Improving our Membership Supports
4. Improving our Representation
5. Environment & Sustainability

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# Improving our Network

## Overview

**The greatest strength of Westmeath PPN is its engagement with local people and groups and effective communications across members. Westmeath PPN will continue to develop its network, increasing the numbers of people involved, and ensuring high quality oversight and governance.**

## Action 1 - Operate the network to the highest possible standard

Westmeath PPN is committed to ensuring that our network operates to best practice standards, including implementing the 6 main Principles of charity Governance Code compliance ([www.governancecode.ie](http://www.governancecode.ie)) as follows:

1. Advancing its charitable purpose
2. Behaving with integrity
3. Leading people
4. Exercising control
5. Working effectively
6. Being accountable and transparent



The PPN will also continue to actively participate in the National PPN Resource Workers Network and the National Secretariat Network and Midland Regional PPN meetings. This will ensure continued learning and sharing of emerging good practice, resulting with the PPN remaining at the forefront of development in Westmeath.

In order to operate Westmeath PPN to the Highest Possible Standard we will:

- i. Adhere to the New National PPN manual
- ii. Westmeath PPN Policy Documents are reviewed and updated as required
- iii. Start journey to implement the 6 main principles of best practice of the Governance Code
- iv. Westmeath PPN attendance at National & Regional Networks
- v. Attendance at all relevant training
- vi. Implementation of best practice training

## Measure of progress

- The New National PPN Manual is adhered too
- Attendance at National Networking Events
- Attendance at relevant training and the implementation of that training
- The network self-assesses as it implements the 6 main principles of the Charity Governance Code



## Action 2 - Develop working Linkage/Thematic Groups

Westmeath PPN will create functioning Linkage/Thematic Groups, which will be developed and become strong and empowered to operate, resulting in each group having a simple work plan. Work plans will have a targeted project that can be progressed at community level. Projects could be anything from a campaign, to an event, to an advocacy initiative. Specific projects will assist the Linkage Groups in addressing issues when they are outside the scope of the county council structures.

The development of Linkage/Thematic Groups requires significant engagement and is dependent on real and genuine community ownership. The development of Linkage/Thematic Groups will be enhanced through the following actions:

- i. Creation of Linkage/Thematic groups
- ii. Create Terms of Reference for each Linkage/Thematic Group
- iii. Facilitation
- iv. Develop work-plans
- v. Reporting structure
- vi. Supports & Funding
- vii. Review at least annually

### Measures of progress

- Terms of Reference created
- Number of Linkage/Thematic Group meetings
- Attendance at Linkage/thematic Group Meetings
- Work-plans created
- Reporting being done
- Positive engagement between the Linkage Groups and other decision-making structures.
- There are clear contributions and policy/practice outcomes from PPN engagement at any new forums.
- Each Linkage Group has a simple work plan and projects that result in specific measurable outcomes for the community



## Action 3 - Grow PPN membership in a planned and sustainable way

There is strength in numbers; the more member groups in Westmeath PPN the greater its representation, its diversity and its voice. In order to increase membership Westmeath PPN will be marketed and promoted through the following methods:

- i. Contact all local resident associations and community groups not involved in the PPN to invite them to participate.
- ii. Encourage PPN members to spread the word and support additional engagement of fellow community members
- iii. Make presentations to community groups which are not currently in membership
- iv. Attend events (with PPN stand) which will increase profile of Westmeath PPN
- v. Create & conduct social media campaigns, targeted at different demographic profiles
- vi. Greater utilisation of outreach facilities in Westmeath such as community centers, libraries, shopping centers, etc.
- vii. Support and engage with any national campaigns
- viii. Work with relevant support agencies such as the local authority and local development companies, to encourage groups they work with to join the PPN
- ix. These actions will be staggered over the period of the strategic plan
- x. The PPN membership database, in-line with GDPR and departmental guidelines, will be updated every two years. This process involves a reregistration of all PPN members

### Measure of Progress

- 20% increase in membership over the period of the strategic plan
  - Maintain an active membership of 50% per annum.\*Note an active member group is anyone who engages with the PPN through an event, Linkage Group, plenary, survey, consultations, at least once per year
  - Number of presentations, events attended etc.
- .....

## Action 4 - Increase the operational capacity of the PPN

Currently the network is supported by a full-time Resource Worker and a temporary full time Support Worker (as of May 2020). Given the broad programme of work, number of meetings and large membership base, there is a need to review the PPN's staff resources, with the view of having a fulltime PPN Resource Worker and fulltime PPN Support Worker in place on a permanent basis.

### Measure of progress

- Permanent Fulltime Resource Worker & Support Worker in place



# Improving Westmeath PPN Communications

## Overview

### The three main objectives of Westmeath PPNs:

**Informing:** Provide information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary sector and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received.

**Developing:** Strengthen the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion, community & voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside /participate.

**Representing:** Facilitate the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary sectors on decision making bodies.

Good communications are the key to Westmeath PPN achieving the above stated aims. Good communications across the membership and between Westmeath PPN and other stakeholders is key to ensuring the success of the work of the PPN. This section outlines how Westmeath PPN plans to build on its communication structures and processes.

## Action 5 - Develop communications in coherent manner

Westmeath PPN must develop and use clear effective communications strategy: which acknowledges that there are clear limits to the time people will give to read communications. Therefore, all Westmeath PPN communications needs to be clear, concise, effective and timely.

- i. Create a coherent Communication Strategy
- ii. Develop an online Social Media presence
- iii. Use simple English
- iv. Website functionality to be reviewed annually and improved where possible
- v. Potential improvements to be reviewed as part of this including the use of online voting, and consultations
- vi. Continue to promote funding opportunities through the website and newsletters
- vii. Expand recipients of the monthly PPN Newsletters to include local agency stakeholders and elected representatives
- viii. Engage with Comhairle na nÓg to explore how PPN communications can be more youth friendly and engaging

## Measure of progress

- Coherent Communication Strategy developed and implemented
- A 20% improvement across all online communication analytics within 2 years
- Create a social media presence
- Increased demand for PPN Newsletter
- Encourage PPN members to spread the word and support additional engagement of fellow community members
- Support and engage with any national campaigns



## Action 6 - Showcase Westmeath PPN achievements

Westmeath PPN has achieved many successes since its beginning in 2014; many successes which were not publicised to its members or wider population. In order to gain profile, trust and confidence in the work of Westmeath PPN it is imperative that the PPN communicates to its members and the public on the progress and achievements of PPN activity.

- i. To have a section added to the website which briefly highlights the achievements of Westmeath PPN
- ii. Create an online social media presence, which can highlight the work and success of Westmeath PPN
- iii. To continue to develop and disseminate annual reports, using infographics to highlight the achievements of the PPN
- iv. Use case studies in newsletter and on website to highlight our success and impact
- v. WPPN Members encouraged to note/acknowledge assistance/support of WPPN publicly on their websites/ social media platforms etc.
- vi. Attending events

## Measure of Progress

- Achievements are recorded and visible on the website, social media and in reports
- Numbers of reports / newsletters / etc. showcasing achievements published



## Action 7 - Westmeath PPN will work to communicate clearly and concisely to its members

In order to support bringing the citizens closer to the work of Government, national organisations and local government through access to useful information and improved communication, Westmeath PPN will work to communicate in user friendly language, distributing useful information, clearly and concisely to its groups and the wider public. Westmeath PPN will do this by:

- i. Support the streamlining of communications on important day to day public information
- ii. Westmeath PPN will communicate policies and useful information clearly and concisely to its members and the wider public
- iii. Develop a communications protocol between Westmeath County Council and the PPN. This will be particularly beneficial during periods of emergency response (i.e. severe weather warnings/Covid-19) and when major works are on-going
- iv. Offer suggestions and on-going feedback on improving the accessibility of the Council's and other organisations and agencies communications

### Measure of Progress

- All Westmeath PPN communications will be clear, concise and timely delivered
- Effective co-ordination between the PPN and Westmeath County Council and other organisations and agencies during major incidents and emergency response





# Improving our Membership Supports

## Overview

**A key objective of Westmeath PPN is to increase membership supports. Feedback from our members has highlighted that training and supports offered to members were appreciated across the network, but that more is required. Therefore, the overall focus of the next strategic period is to continue to build the capacity of groups and representatives to engage with the public policy making process through awareness raising, mentoring and training.**

## Action 8 - Provide a range of training supports

Westmeath PPN will continue to offer a range of training supports to members in partnership with relevant organisations. These will focus on two broad areas, the first is to build the capacity of the members groups and the second is to help PPN members and volunteer representatives to be more effective advocates. The PPN will also aim to communicate all training opportunities that become available.

### Measure of Progress

- Number of training opportunities communicated to member groups
  - Number of members attending training
  - Provision of relevant training by WPPN alone and/or in conjunction with other organisations
- .....

## Action 9 - Create more networking opportunities

Consultation with our members has time and time again emphasised the importance of networking and peer to peer learning. Westmeath PPN will work to facilitate more networking opportunities for its members for peer to peer learning, and access to tutors, trainers and knowledgeable people who can assist and increase capacity and resilience in community & voluntary groups in Westmeath.

- Organise funding workshops
- Organise funding clinics
- Organise information events
- WPPN Plenary
- WPPN Municipal District meetings
- Organise Networking opportunities at all of above

### Measure of progress

- Number of networking opportunities created
- Number of members attending networking events
- After event research/surveys



## Action 10 - Provide more information sharing opportunities & supports for PPN Representatives

All WPPN Representatives and delegates are volunteers from the community and voluntary sector who give of their time freely to the PPN. Without these essential representatives and delegates, WPPN would not be able to do its work or achieve its objectives. It is therefore immensely important that the PPN acknowledges and facilitates the participation of all volunteer PPN Representatives and delegates. The following support structures will be explored and where possible expanded:

- i. Provide information sharing and learning opportunities for PPN Representatives through the WPPN Representatives Network
- ii. Work with other PPNs to provide collective opportunities for Linkage Group representatives to meet to discuss synergies across shared topic areas
- iii. Explore methods of improving two-way communications between WPPN members and Representatives on structures and further to outside agencies
- iv. WPPN attendance at National Secretariat Network
- v. Provide an opportunity for PPN Representatives and delegates to engage in a personal development plan to include training and mentoring supports
- vi. Explore with other PPNs the chance for representatives to attending training and networking opportunities

### Measure of progress

- WPPN Representatives Network Meetings
- Number WPPN representatives attending
- PPN Representatives engage with and progress through Personal Development Plans
- Regional and national meetings of Representatives considered useful and thus recurring



## Action 11 - Develop methods to make the PPN more understood and accessible to all

In order to make representative and participatory roles more understood and accessible to current and future PPN member groups, the PPN will develop and implement a series of training tools and methods to explain what the PPN is, how it works and how to get involved.

These training tools and methodologies will outline targets as well as the actions that will be undertaken to achieve these targets. The PPN will work with the relevant national and local agencies to achieve this.

- i. Create an easy to understand booklet about the PPN
- ii. Update WPPN Representatives manual as required
- iii. Organise training on and about the PPN
- iv. WPPN will do more presentations and attend more events to explain what the PPN is and how it works
- v. Enhanced mentoring programme

### Measure of progress

- Booklet created and distributed
- Methods developed and outcomes agreed
- Training delivered
- Presentations delivered
- Mentoring developed





# Improving Westmeath PPN Representation

## Overview

**The PPN is an important and effective way for local groups to influence local planning and decision making. Good communications across the membership and between the PPN and other stakeholders is key to ensuring the success of this work. This section outlines how Westmeath PPN will build on its communication structures and processes.**

## Action 12 - Progress the PPN as a mandatory consultative and participatory structure

The PPN is an evolving structure. Although awareness of the PPN among key local and national agencies is being improved, the PPN will advocate that the Irish Government requires all consultations to notify PPNs in the areas affected by their policy development.

### Measure of progress

- A statement or circular is issued from the government regarding the requirement to notify PPNs of consultations in a timely manner
- Increase in number of consultations coming through the PPN

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## Action 13 - Foster key partnerships and explore further public participation initiatives

There is potential for citizens to extend their influence through the development of PPN representation roles on other decision-making forums. To develop this role the PPN will gain agreement to have PPN representation on key committees in areas of strategic interest to the PPN, for instance in community development, health services, environment and heritage.

The PPN will explore innovative public participation initiatives taking place in Ireland and the European Union with a view to learning from these and introducing enhanced participative democracy measures in Westmeath (such as developing a Participation Unit, trialing Online Democracy and Participatory Budgeting, etc.). This should result in more active community participation in consultations, decision making and policy development exercises in Westmeath County Council and other local agencies.

New and existing partnerships need to be fostered on an on-going basis, particularly in the areas of capacity building, in order to support PPN member groups to meaningfully engage in activity to achieve their goals.

### Measure of progress

- Increase representation on relevant local authority committees and consultation processes
- There are new representative roles on non-local authority decision making forums
- New participatory democracy initiatives trialed



## Action 14 - Further develop relationships between the PPN and other relevant agencies and organisations

For Westmeath PPN to effectively progress issues, beneficial and supportive relationships need to be continually developed between the PPN and other agencies and organisations including elected Public Representatives. To further support this, and to raise awareness with other agencies and organisations as to the benefits of engaging with PPNs, the following will be done:

- i. Community Wellbeing Vision/Strategy document will be distributed to all relevant agencies and organisations including Public Representatives
- ii. Seek support from agencies and organisations including public representatives, where relevant, when progressing community issues
- iii. Ensure relevant agencies and organisations including Public Representatives are kept up to date on PPN activity through circulating newsletters and activity reports
- iv. Establish a system for PPN Linkage Group Representatives to meet the SPC / LCDC / JPC chairpersons prior to meetings, as needed, in order to build productive professional relationships
- v. Coming up to local elections the PPN to organise 'meet the candidate' events for PPN members. – while adhering to principles that PPNs are non-political – all candidates be invited; meeting facilitated fairly and impartially.

### Measure of progress

- Westmeath Community wellbeing Vision distributed
- Number of PPN Newsletters etc circulated





# Environment & Sustainability

## Overview

The PPN is an important and effective way for local groups to hear about and influence local planning and decision making in relation to the environment. Good communications across the membership and between the PPN and other stakeholders is key to ensuring the success of this work. WPPN will strive to respect the environment. We are dedicated to environmental improvements that create a sustainable future and nurture familial, social, environmental and economical improvements in the communities we work with. We are committed to the continuous learning of environmental improvements with the goal of the health and well-being of our members and the preservation and care of the Earth's resources.

## Action 15 - WPPN will operate in an environmentally sustainable way

- i. We strive to encourage our members to conduct their activities in a safe and environmentally responsible manner
- ii. Westmeath PPN will pledge to recycle and use products that are made from recycled materials whenever possible
- iii. Westmeath PPN will be as paper free as possible

### Measure of progress

- WPPN reduces its paper consumption
- WPPN uses recycled products
- WPPN recycles as much as possible

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## Action 16 - WPPN will actively try to positively influence policy on environment

- i. Wherever possible Westmeath PPN will actively try to positively influence policy on Climate Action
- ii. Whenever possible Westmeath PPN will ensure the impact on the environment is considered in policy making
- iii. Westmeath PPN will make submissions to try to positively influence policy in relation to the environment

### Measures of Progress

- WPPN positively influences policy decisions
- WPPN submissions made



## Action 17 - WPPN will strive to encourage our members to conduct their activities in an environmentally safe and responsible manner

- i. WPPN will distribute information on how members can positively influence the environment
- ii. WPPN will support environmental training for its members
- iii. WPPN will forward the adoption of the Midland Region PPN Tidy Towns Environment Charter with its members

### Measures of progress

- Number of Environmental Information distributes to WPPN membership
- Environment training/supported provided for WPPN membership
- Adoption of Midland Region PPN Tidy Towns Charter





# Appendix 1 Westmeath PPN

## Community Wellbeing Vision/ Statement

### Overview

Through the PPN User Guide, the Department of Rural and Community Development has tasked Westmeath PPN to develop a Community Wellbeing Vision or Statement for Westmeath. A wellbeing statement looks at what is required for the wellbeing of individuals, groups and communities now and for the generations to come.

Understanding what wellbeing is for our community is important to ensure that everyone involved in the PPN is aligned to a common vision. Wellbeing is a term being used across almost all governmental strategies. Many of these strategies have common elements. This wellbeing statement takes these common elements and defines wellbeing from the perspective of local Westmeath residents and member groups of the PPN.

To develop the community wellbeing vision/statement participants in the three workshops across the Municipal Districts were asked to describe what wellbeing meant to themselves and their community. 146 comments were collected from 110 workshop participants. These have been thematically analysed to produce a series of statements which together summaries what wellbeing is for our community. It is envisioned that this Community Wellbeing vision/ statement will guide the work of Westmeath PPN, as well as how we do our work.



### Community Wellbeing Vision for Westmeath is:

**“Westmeath is a flourishing community with a thriving economy where we live and work sustainably. It is a welcoming and safe place which values and respects all people. We enjoy a beautiful and healthy natural environment and celebrate our rich heritage. Each of us has the freedom to live the life we choose and have a say in decisions that affect us. We all participate in our communities making them vibrant places where no-one is left behind. We are all supported to be the best that we can be.”**

The above overarching Vision for Community Wellbeing in County Westmeath was created by combining the Athlone/Moate & Mullingar/Kinnegad Municipal District Consultations & Workshops.

Alongside the overarching vision for Westmeath, WPPN developed a Vision for Community Wellbeing for each of the Municipal Districts of Athlone/Moate & Mullingar/Kinnegad. These were developed by reviewing and analysing the responses from the workshops and consultation; then distilled/translated these into “high-level” statements.

**Note:** As these are high level visions - specific issues mentioned are not included in the statement but these will be shared with WPPN Reps working on Local Committees/Boards.

## Community Wellbeing Vision & Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice.



In September 2015, Ireland was one of the 193 Members States of the United Nations (UN) who adopted these goals. The Goals interconnect and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve each Goal and target by 2030.

Governments have primary responsibility for implementing the SDGs, but the Goals do not belong solely to governments. The Goals belong to everyone, in every community, in every country across the world. To achieve the SDGs, governments, businesses, communities and individuals will all have to work together. Everyone can contribute to that work, from businesses adopting sustainable corporate strategies, to communities working together to improve their local environment, to the individual choices we all make as consumers.

For this reason, Westmeath PPN have identified how Our Community Wellbeing Vision links with the shared goals and have identified for each wellbeing “domain” or aspect which, Sustainable Development Goal is being progressed with the vision.



# Appendix 2 Westmeath Demographics

## Locational Context

Located in the heart of Ireland, County Westmeath consists of an area of 1,756 sq km and is historically known as the 'Lake County', rich in arts, culture, heritage and natural amenities. These many natural amenities include the Hill of Uisneach, the mythological and sacred Centre of Ireland, the River Shannon and Lough Ree, adjacent to Athlone, the River Brosna, Lough Owel and Lough Ennell, adjacent to Mullingar, with Lough Derravaragh, Lough Lene and Lough Sheelin in the north of the county.

The M4/N4 which traverses the county in a north-westerly direction offers the county ease of access to the greater Dublin area, with Dublin Airport and Dublin Port just one hour's drive from Mullingar. The M6 from Kinnegad, through Athlone provides further connection to Galway and the west. The N52, an important national secondary route traversing the county, further connects the north east with the Munster region.

Significant rail infrastructure enhances this connectivity, with the Dublin-Sligo railway line serving Mullingar and the Dublin-Westport/Dublin-Galway line serving Athlone.

## Westmeath Data Profile

Population trends, economic trends and societal changes influence the decision-making process and service delivery planning. Having awareness and understanding of these societal changes is critical in determining future strategic objectives. As the main provider of local services, we must be aware of these changes and adopt strategies and plans to meet changing societal needs. In what follows we set out some of the key data relating to the makeup of the county:

### a) Sub County Structure

There are four electoral areas in the county, Mullingar, Kinnegad, Moate and Athlone which in turn form the Mullingar-Kinnegad and Athlone-Moate Municipal Districts through which many of the local services are delivered by the Council.

### b) Demographic Profile

Census 2016 recorded a population of 88,770 in Westmeath, an increase of 3% since the previous census in 2011. 49% of the county's population were recorded as living in urban areas and 51% living in rural areas with the proportion of urban population increasing.

### c) Age Profile

The data reflects a population getting older – with 11,370 (or 12.8%) aged 65 years and over and the average age of the County's population at 36.8 years, an increase of 1.4% and 1.2 years respectively since 2011.

### d) Housing

Westmeath had 31,813 permanent occupied dwellings in April 2016, compared with 30,624 in 2011.

### e) Housing Need

The number of households qualified for social housing supports (Housing Need) rose from 1,285 households in 2011 to a peak of 1,926 households in 2016. It has fallen steadily since to 1,305 households in June 2019.

Homelessness remains an ongoing issue with 36 adults and 27 dependents in emergency accommodation in Westmeath at the end of November 2019.

### f) Migration Ethnicity and Nationalities

In Census 2016, 11.3% of Westmeath people indicated that they were non-Irish nationals. Polish nationals form the largest group, followed by the UK.

### **g) Commuting**

73% of people living and working in County Westmeath travelled to work by car and the level of public transport use is well below the national average. CSO recorded 1,386 more workers commuting into the county than out of the county on a daily basis.

### **h) Deprivation and Social Exclusion**

From the 2011 census to the 2016 census the number of people living alone in the county increased by 5% to 7,482. Whilst the 2016 census showed that Westmeath people had an average disposable income of €18,430, the highest average in the midlands, there are areas within the county which are still designated as disadvantaged and in need of support. These areas include inner urban areas of Westmeath's larger towns and rural areas which are located to the north and north west of the county.

### **i) Education, Employment and Economic Activity**

Of those aged 15 and over in the county in April 2016, some 20,586 (39%) had a third level qualification. There are 34,935 persons resident in the county who were recorded as working, both inside and outside the county.

### **j) Industrial Sector**

The largest (broad) industrial sector in the county was the wholesale and retail trade, accounting for 5,154 workers (14.6%). Human health and social work activities was the next largest, with 4,203 workers. Agriculture accounted for 1,934 workers, 5.48% of the total recorded at work, comprising 1698 farmers and 236 agricultural workers.

### **k) Unemployment**

The total unemployment rate in 2016 was recorded as 6,666 persons or 16% compared with a national average rate of 13%. This was a massive decrease since 2011, which recorded 21%.

### **l) Total No. of Businesses**

A total of approximately 4,786 businesses were recorded, based on the address at which an enterprise is registered for Revenue purposes, in Westmeath in 2017 (CSO, 2017).



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Westmeath Community Wellbeing Vision 2020-24

Westmeath PPN constitution 2020



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True to the ideals of PPNs this has truly been a piece of ground up consultation and reflects the core direction that member groups want WPPN to go in the next 5 years: with a key Strategic Goal of:

**“That Westmeath PPN is an integral and respected local decision-making partner and network. It is engaged and pro-actively consulted in the development of all Westmeath community, social, economic and infrastructural policies. Its members are well supported and aware of their ability to make a difference for their community.”**





**For more information Contact:**

**Westmeath Public Participation Network**

**WPPN Resource Worker:** Brigid Geoghegan

**WPPN Support worker:** Ursula Harper

**Phone:** 044-9332157

**Email:** [info@westmeathppn.ie](mailto:info@westmeathppn.ie)

**Web:** [www.westmeathppn.ie](http://www.westmeathppn.ie)

**Postal Address:** Community Development Section,  
Westmeath County Council,  
Áras an Chontae,  
Mullingar,  
Co. Westmeath,  
N91 FH4N

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