

Westmeath PPN Workplan 2024-2025

Overview

Westmeath Public Participation Network (WPPN) is an independent umbrella network of community & voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups active within the county.

Public Participation Networks (PPNs) were established by the Irish Government under the Local Government (Reform) Act 2014 to be the main link through which the Local Authority connects with these groups.

WPPN is governed by the Secretariat, a voluntary board elected from the WPPN membership whose responsibility is to oversee the development of the network and ensure that the objectives of the PPN are carried out. The Secretariat are supported by one full time Resource Worker and full time Support Worker who manage the day-to-day running of the PPN.

Funding for WPPN is provided by both the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and by Westmeath County Council through an annual allocation.

Government guidelines outline 3 main objectives for PPNs:

- 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.
- Strengthen the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate.
- Provide information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary sector and act as a hub around which information is distributed and received.

These Government guidelines also specify a number of principles and values that PPNs are expected to operate by; they should be inclusive, participatory, independent, valuing diversity, transparent and accountable.

Westmeath PPN Workplan 2024-2025

Adoption of Workplan

Westmeath PPN consulted with its plenary on the 10 April 2024 about what should be prioritized as regards training and workshops for the upcoming plan. The findings were very instructive and the PPN will endeavor to deliver along the requested lines.

- **65 votes were cast for Training.** 30 votes for Mental Health. 21 votes for DRiVE. 14 votes for Other suggestions including Line Dancing and The Cube.
- **61 votes were cast for Workshops.** 34 votes for Climate/Biodiversity. 18 votes for Raised Allotments. 9 votes for 'Other' suggestions including for Art Classes, Dancing, Health and Safety, Well-being, Meditation and Relaxation, Sports and Information workshops on how to apply for grants, funding.
- The final topic brought before the Plenary was in relation to Governance. There was a total of 58 votes cast. 30 votes for Committee Skills. 23 votes for Media Skills. 5 votes for 'Other' governance options, including Presentation Skills, Event organization skills, Budgeting skills, Social Media Skills and Basic Computer Skills.

WPPN's 2024/2025 workplan is a biennial plan covering from the 1 January 2024 to the 31 December 2025 that incorporates the core objectives of PPNs from WPPN 5-Year Strategic Plan 2021-25. The focus of WPPN's work in 2024/2025 will be on:

1. Supporting and building the capacity of our members and our representatives to engage with Westmeath County Council's policy-making structures.
2. Building cohesive and engaged Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion pillar groups within the PPN who can support the work of our representatives.
3. Continuing to engage with groups from under-represented communities, new communities and minority groups to make sure these groups have an opportunity to join the PPN and input into local authority decision-making.
4. Continuing to support the local communities.
5. Strengthen the Linkage Groups.

We look forward to working on these aims with WPPN members and other stakeholders over the coming year.

Westmeath PPN Secretariat members:

Anne Drury, BMB Active Retirement (Social Inclusion); **Larry Quain**, Independent People with Disabilities (Social Inclusion); **Dave Raftis**, Westmeath Climate & Environment Network (WECAN) (Environment); **Hugh Farrell**, Irish Wheelchair Association (Athlone/Moate Municipal District); **Michael Kenny**, Delvin Tidy Towns (Environment); **Cathryn Whelehan**, Brookfield Residents Association (Mullingar/Kinnegad Municipal District); **Vincent Bagnall**, Kinnegad Combined CE (Community & Voluntary)



Westmeath PPN Workplan 2024-2025

Strategic Area 1	Improving our Network	
	Indicator	Output/Measure
1. Operate the network to the highest possible standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhere to National PPN Manual WPPN Policy Documents are reviewed and updated as required Implement the 6 main principles of best practice of the Governance Code WPPN attend at National & Regional Networks Implementation of best practice training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhering to National PPN Manual All documents are reviewed and updated as required Implementing principles Attending quarterly Regional PPN meetings & annual National PPN Conference Attendance at relevant training & the implementation of that training.
2. Support Working Linkage / Thematic Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate Linkage / Thematic Groups Arrange appropriate guest speakers Organise appropriate training as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate 10 Linkage Group meetings in 2024 (elections) and 15 in 2025 At least 5 guest speakers engaged per annum Provide Training as set out in Plenary on the 10/4/24.
3. Grow Westmeath PPN membership in a planned and sustainable way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host Funding and Resource Workshops to support the registration of new groups. Attend events (with PPN stand) which will increase profile of WPPN Create & conduct social media campaigns, targeted at different demographic profiles Greater utilization of outreach facilities in Westmeath such as community centers, libraries, shopping centers etc Support & engage with any national campaigns Work with relevant support agencies such as the local authority and local development companies to encourage groups they work with to join the PPN The PPN membership database, in line with GDPR and departmental guidelines, will be updated every two years. This process involves a re-registration of all PPN members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have 1100 groups affiliated to the PPN by 31/12/25 RE-registration planned for Q2 2025. Support National Awareness Campaign for PPN's through website & social media Attend Expos & events to increase profile of WPPN
4. Increase the Operational capacity of the PPN.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent Full-time Resource Worker & Support Worker in Place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPN Support Staff in place.



Westmeath PPN Workplan 2024-2025

Strategic Area 2	Improving our Communications	
	Indicator	Output/Measure
5. Develop Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re- development of Westmeath PPN website and online Social Media presence Use simple English Potential improvements to be reviewed as part of this include the use of as online voting, and consultations. Continue to promote funding opportunities through the website and newsletters. Expand recipients of the monthly PPN Newsletters to include local agency stakeholders and elected representatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement across all online communication analytics, in particular an operating website by mid-2025 Increase demand for PPN Newsletter – 12 created per annum Support & engage with national campaigns. Increased number of followers on social media.
6. Showcase our achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new website should highlight the achievements of Westmeath PPN. To continue to develop and disseminate annual reports, case studies etc using infographics to highlight the achievements of the PPN. Attending events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievements recorded on PPN Website and published in monthly newsletter Social Media work ongoing. All events are attended by PPN Staff or Secretariat;
7. WPPN will work to communicate clearly and concisely to its members & the wider public		

Strategic Area 3	Improving our Membership Supports	
	Indicator	Output/Measure
8. Provide a range of training supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a range of training supports as set out in Plenary Review 10/4/24 to members in partnership with relevant organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of members attending training. Variety of training offered. Review training with participants and report back into Plenary annually
9. Create more networking opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise funding workshops and clinics WPPN Plenary WPPN Municipal District meetings Organise Reps network meeting Attend and/ or organise Regional PPN meeting WPPN attendance at National Secretariat Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Funding workshops and clinics annually 2 Plenary per year Municipal District meetings 2 Reps network meetings per year 4 MRPPN per annum
10. Sharing opportunities and supports for PPN Representatives		
11. Develop methods to make the PPN better understood and accessible to all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote easy to understand booklet about the PPN Update WPPN Representatives manual as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion at all events attended Launch new manual



Westmeath PPN Workplan 2024-2025

Strategic Area 4	Improving our Representation	
	Indicator	Output/Measure
12. Progress the PPN as a mandatory consultative & participatory structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate all consultations opportunities available to the PPN. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of consultations responded to by the secretariat and the Plenary and record these
13. Foster key partnerships and explore further public participation initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustain representation on relevant local authority committees and consultation processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 90% representation places filled and tracked
14. Further develop relationships between PPN relevant agencies, organisations and Public Representatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Wellbeing Vision/Strategy document will be promoted and extended with Plenary approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Wellbeing Vision/Strategy to be extended.

Strategic Area 5	Environment & Sustainability	
	Indicator	Output/Measure
15. WPPN will operate in an environmentally sustainable way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Westmeath PPN will pledge to recycle and use products that are made from recycled materials whenever possible. Westmeath PPN will be as paper free as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in paper usage
16. WPPN will actively try to positively influence policy on issues such as Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Westmeath PPN will make submissions to try to positively influence policy in relation to the environment. WPPN will host Climate Change workshops. WPPN will distribute information on how members can positively influence the environment. WPPN will support environmental training for its members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of submissions Number of attendees at training sessions.
17. WPPN will strive to encourage our members to conduct their activities in a safe and environmentally responsible manner.		