Cavan Public Participation Network
Summer 2023 Roadshows

Templeport   Arva   Shercock

Report On The Findings From Community Discussions At These.

Líonra Rannpháirtíochta Pobail An Chabháin
Public Participation Network Cavan

Introduction

Public Participation Networks were established under The Local Government Act 2014 as a means whereby non-political, non-business and non-religious community entities can have a voice at decision making tables. It is thereby a requirement that Local Authorities engage their community representation through their local PPNs, which are wholly driven by the community membership.

CavanPPN has provided a total of 37 representatives, elected from among their 350 registered community groups onto 38 representative posts on 18 separate boards, committees and organisations (see www.cavanppn.ie for more). This is the process of **ONE WAY representation**.

To facilitate these reps reporting back to you, the groups who elected them, PPNs are tasked with setting up 'Linkage Groups' to link back in to the membership. However, this has been attempted by CavanPPN in 2016 and 2021 without much engagement, mainly due to the onerousness on asking volunteers to add another requirement to their representation. We also asked reps to fill in short one page reports, but this has also not been successful.

Instead, some PPNs, such as County Clare, host Roadshows to facilitate **TWO WAY representation** where the local communities in each area are asked to come along to highlight their worries, issues and solutions to the PPN so we can report this onto your reps on the various bodies they represent you upon (see last page for a full list of these). These items discussed are collated into a report and sent onto the reps who are asked to report back to us on any progress made in highlighting your case.

In this way, we hope to create a dynamic way of *'working smarter, not harder'* to enable our reps to truly represent the community who elected them and not simply to speak with their own views and opinions on these influential boards and committees. All this is what we hope to achieve, without adding to their already generous volunteer time on top of the volunteering they do for their own community groups.

Participative democracy is a model whereby we can strengthen the democratic and social fabric of our communities, adding to representative democracy in partnership with Councilors to develop as fair and representative a locality as possible. The Local Government Act 2014 stresses this mission to uphold community voices and PPNs are the method through which we can achieve this. We just need the investment of interest and energy to make this a success.

You can find out more about PPNs at
https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/b59ee9-community-network-groups/
And about CavanPPN at www.cavanppn.ie

The Cavan PPN Staff.

Templeport Roadshow   **8.6.23**

The Templeport Roadshow was hosted in the beautiful corner of West Cavan to support the voice of The Cavan-Belturbet Municipal District. The guest speakers for the Roadshow were Jane Crudden from Peace Plus and Sandy Holland from Cavan County Local Development who gave presentations to the attending community volunteers on how their agencies can support their community work.

Items Raised By Community:

- There are iconic buildings, such as the Old Rath and an iconic hardware store, in Killeshandra, these could be the hub for a heritage village for the county, along with the beautiful lake surrounds it would boost tourism to the area.
- Sustain and develop the tourism of West Cavan, particularly to support pre-school children and their parents to connect between their homes and local creches.
- Initiate means to support biodiversity and self sufficiency practices and support existing initiatives, such as those being rolled out by GIY West Cavan and Ballyconnel volunteers.

- Support Tidy Towns in the area to work on not only alternative attractions to their areas, but better ways to locally brand their areas. Training on signage and village marketing for groups would be beneficial to increase footfall.
- Take a look at the Municipal District itself, with Cavan Town's population creating an inequity of supports to the MD due to its size and importance, compared to West Cavan.
- Support a better Geopark advertising in Cavan Town to create a push for tourists and locals alike to see and be curious to visit West Cavan.

- Clarity on roles and responsibilities of those employed to support community. An easy guide on what agencies do what for the community sector. It's hard to understand what roles different partners play.
- Support networking events the PPN could host, like First Responders in Corlough setting up to meet and learn from First Responders in Kilcogy which have been there for years.
- Community Recognition Awards would be a great idea. Some PPNs do them, like in Leitrim. Could this be done to thank community volunteers for their work?
- Ancient heritage: this area of Ireland is hugely rich in ancient heritage, e.g. Crom Cruagh, yet not much done to actively promote it like tours and guides etc. e.g. Ballyheady Cairn.

Arva Roadshow   **15.6.23**

The Arva Roadshow was hosted, unfortunately, the same evening of a major local football match (we weren't to know until just beforehand) but a few local people bravely arrived and helped us understand the issues and solutions for the area. The guest speakers were James Masterson from LEADER and Vanda Brady of The Cavan Volunteer Centre. Both presented very engaging and interesting information sessions to the attendees and the discussions afterwards were very lively and insightful.

Items Raised By Community:

- Some local towns and villages are seen as being 'eaten up' by local property developers who are purchasing property cheaply and developing cost effective housing. Though members recognized the need for housing, the also warned of 'oversaturating localities with nothing but housing' at the cost of services and local businesses.
- Community members tasked the PPN with developing a village survey of what local people would like to see developed to make their villages more vibrant.
- On foot of this, the development of a 'village network' so fellow villages, towns, Tidy Towns etc. can meet once per year to share and display their projects and ideas.
- There was felt to be a disjointedness between the County Museum and the local town of Ballyjamesduff where a more integrated local plan to direct people going to the museum into the town could be developed.
- The scourge of drugs, both among young people and as a driver of petty crime, was raised by attendees.
- It was felt that community gardens should be invested in as local hubs to teach wellbeing and sustainability, growing courses and mental health tips.
- Public transport was seen as still lacking in some rural areas, particularly in the stretch of roads around Ballyjamesduff, more frequency between the town and Cavan was needed.
- Support Men's Sheds in smaller towns.
- Rural isolation was a major discussion point, highlighting the fears single older men and women feel in rural areas. The lack of night transport in some rural areas and inability to travel to meet one another or events to bring people together was highlighted in local villages and towns. A centralization of entertainment to larger population centres has led to a decrease in village life and rural vibrancy.
- It was recognized that councils and development agencies and the ppn have worked to highlight and mitigate these issues but funding to support these projects have been lacking at times.

Shercock Roadshow   19.6.23

The Shercock Roadshow was held on a very warm and sunny afternoon in which many community volunteers sacrificed a gorgeous summer's weather to discuss their views. The guest speakers were from Cavan County Council's Community & Enterprise Section and national community support agency, The Wheel. Presentations were very active and engaged and enthused members to open discussion and conversation about their communities.

<u>Items Raised By Community:</u>

- Village vibrancy, vitality and viability discussed in depth. Ireland is a nation of villages, the disintegration of village life is losing us a core culture of Ireland. Members asked if we can learn how other nations met this challenge to sustain their rural life.
- Policies are hard to understand, better plain speaking and easier access and better roadmaps of how policies get to practice are needed locally and nationally.
- Local transport in rural areas needs invested in nationally. In other nations it's easy to reach hard to reach rural areas on public transport, not so in Ireland.
- Supporting youth initiatives to take pride in their locality. Better inclusion and a sense of ownership will not only lead to young people caring for their rural areas but staying or returning to them.
- Nothing about us without us: several members asked is community and local development could be made to be more inclusive of local views. They recognized the idea of PPNs but having never heard of them before questioned the support of awareness for them locally.
- Combat dereliction and bring better awareness to communities of how to do this.
- Better walking/cycle paths in key towns to local amenities such as connecting Shercock to the local lake as a means to benefit the locality.
- Develop the local heritage elements of the area such as the linen culture that thrived here.
- Onsite compactors at recycling sites for helping people recycle more.
- Better training in what can/cannot be recycled and how to deal with unrecyclables.
- Focusing on strategies of reduction and re-use for common materials.
- Develop a handbook/guidelines on how to welcome new communities into our areas.

Next Steps

CavanPPN hosts 38 representations on:

- *Cavan LCDC (Local Community Development Committee)*
- *Peace Plus Committee*
- *Cavan County Council SPC (Strategic Policy Cttee) for Housing, Social & Cultural matters.*
- *Cavan County Council SPC for Climate, Biodiversity & Environmental Action.*
- *Cavan County Council SPC for Transport & Infrastructure.*
- *Cavan County Council SPC for Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning.*
- *Cavan County Council SPC for Cultural Development, Irish Language & Sports.*
- *Cavan County Childcare Committee.*
- *Local Link Committee.*
- *Cavan Sports Partnership.*
- *Cavan Drugs and Alcohol Taskforce.*
- *Cavan Connect For Life Committee.*
- *Cavan Heritage Forum.*
- *Healthy Cavan Initiative.*
- *Teach Oscail Family Resource Centre.*
- *National PPN Secretariat.*
- *Cavan Bridge Street Centre.*
- *Cavan Recreation Forum.*

We will be dispatching this report to all your representatives on these bodies as well as the political representatives of the county so that all democratic reps, participative and representative can work together to help highlight and create a better and brighter County Cavan to both live in and visit. The bodies upon which these representatives sit form the heart of where the policies and strategies that drive our county are created and the place at which we can influence change.

CavanPPN hope to continue the use of this Roadshow initiative to regularly keep in touch with our member groups in different towns in the county and we will be reporting this back at our bi-annual plenary gathering of groups. The reps themselves will be asked to feedback on their highlight of these items and we will be hoping to develop more of our **TWO WAY** process of representation going forward.

A special thanks to the guest speakers from the six agencies who brought valuable information and engagement to local communities. To the host locations who provided wonderful service and supports. Thanks also to the local politicians who attended to hear and support the community voice at these, including our new Cathaoirleach Philip Brady. And finally, a heartfelt thanks to all the community volunteers who came out to speak about their work and ideas for their communities. Without you all, we would have a poorer county in Cavan and we appreciate all that you do for all our localities.

CavanPPN
www.cavanppn.ie