



# Laois Public Participation Network

Minutes of Meeting of PPN Secretariat

Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020, 7.00pm

Via Teleconference.

Present: Mr. Vincent Booth - Chair  
Mr. Michael J. Cobbe  
Mr. Paddy Buggy  
Mr. Donal O' Shea  
Ms. Ann Fleming  
Mr. Bolaji Adeyanju  
Mr. John Oxley

Apologies:

In Attendance: Mr. Dan Bergin, PPN Resource Worker.  
Ms. Ailish Keane, PPN Support Worker.

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The minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020 were proposed by Paddy Buggy and seconded by John Oxley.

## Update on Laois PPN September & October Events

Dan gave the Secretariat members an update of all the events that the Laois PPN facilitated during September and October.

- **19<sup>th</sup> September** – MDA, Mountmellick, Crime Prevention Talk with Garda Sergeant Graham Kavanagh. In line with Government guidelines, the number of participants was capped at 10. Thank you to Paddy Buggy for hosting our event.
- **20<sup>th</sup> September** – Biodiversity Walk & Talk in Abbeyleix Bog. There were two groups led by with ecologist Dr. Fiona MacGowan and Chris Uys of the Abbeyleix Bog Project which were shown the treasure throve of biodiversity that exists in Abbeyleix Bog. This year marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commencement of the Abbeyleix Bog Project. Each attendee received a gift of the Biodiversity Data Centre Plant / Shrub Swatch.
- **25<sup>th</sup> September** – Castle Durrow. “Autumn Blooms” event for 55+ age group in Castle Durrow featuring a guided walk by the head gardener followed by afternoon tea on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September.
- **26<sup>th</sup> September** – Ballintubbert Gardens & House. This was an outdoor event called “Wild Food Wander” led by Mary Bulfin (aka Wild Food Mary) was a foraging workshop. Attendees took part in foraging workshop, picked apples in the orchard,

received a guided tour of the gardens, followed by a picnic and were given a gift of a jar of homemade preserve. Ballintubbert Gardens is set to become the first organically certified formal gardens in Ireland.

- **3<sup>rd</sup> October** – Rock of Dunamaise. Laois PPN in partnership with Laois Heritage organised this outdoor event called “Ramble at the Rock. This was a guided tour of the Rock of Dunamaise led by Experiencing Ireland CEO and Tour Guide, Trudy Carmody. Laois PPN has 3 reps on the Laois Heritage Forum. The Rock of Dunamaise is one of the most iconic landmarks in Laois and has been of significant importance in the history of Laois and Ireland through the centuries. Attendees were given a gift of ‘Mapping Laois’ by Arnold Horner and treated to hot beverages and treats provided by Rural Vagabonds.
- **11<sup>th</sup> October** – Mick Dowling Memorial Walk. Laois PPN in conjunction with Laois Tourism and Laois Tour Guides Forum held a walk on the ‘Ridge of Cappard’ in the Slieve Bloom mountains on the first anniversary of Mick’s passing. Attendees included members of the Dowling family and members of the many groups that Mick was involved with. There were two walking groups led by Shane Dowling and Trudy Carmody.
- **21<sup>st</sup> October** – Building your 2021 Fundraising Strategy. So many Community Groups have traditionally relied on raffles, church gate collections, bag packing and local events to raise money and many of these routes have been taken away. The workshop covered possible funding strategies and ideas for Community Groups for 2021. The workshops were facilitated by Kevin Delaney of Academy Street Workshop who has over 12 years professional fundraising and training experience working with nonprofits.

There is great interest from our member groups in all the events. The events have proved popular and in high demand with our member groups with the events fully booked within days and in a number of cases hours, of advertising the event. The feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive.

Vincent Booth complemented Dan and Ailish on the variety of Laois PPN events that would appeal and be of benefit to the Member Groups of the Community, Environmental and Social Inclusion Pillars of Laois PPN.

All events were in line with Government Guidelines regarding Covid19 at the time of the event.

The Secretariat thanked Dan and Ailish for all the work they have done to organise and run these events.

### **Laois CONNECTS**

Laois CONNECTS launched on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October, which is World Mental Health Day. Laois PPN organised 2 events for Laois Connects.

The first event was originally scheduled for Castle Durrow on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October but changed to a online event to the Government Guidelines. Philly McMahon, 7 time All Ireland winning footballer with Dublin and author of "The Choice". Philly spoke about the impact of life changing events such as Covid 19, unemployment, drug addiction or loss of a loved one can have on your mental health and the choices we make. Philly's talk focused on the power of making positive choices when faced life with altering events. Philly spoke from real life experience as he lost his brother through drug addiction in 2012.

Philly is now a brand ambassador for the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) and a long-term advocate of good mental health.

There was huge interest in this event and the participants ranged from all different member groups from GAA Clubs, Youth Clubs, Musical Societies and Schools to Residents Associations, Tidy Towns and Scout Groups.

Laois PPN's second event for Laois CONNECTS was '5 Ways to Wellbeing'. This online Zoom workshop was facilitated by Finola Colgan, Development Officer for Mental Health Ireland. The event took place on 14<sup>th</sup> October and attendees received E-Certificates for participating.

### **Positive Media Coverage**

Laois PPN has received extremely positive media coverage over the last number of months with our events featuring in both the local newspapers - Leinster Express and the Laois Nationalist and on Laois Today. The feedback has been very good. This has help to raise the profile of Laois PPN and our membership has expanded.

### **Community and Voluntary Awards 2020**

Laois County Council in partnership with Laois PPN have announced that this year's Community and Voluntary Awards 2020 will be a virtual online event. The closing date for applications for the Community and Voluntary Awards 2020 is tomorrow 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Judging will take place in November by independent adjudicators, with the awards to take place in the middle of December. Dan advised the Secretariat that Laois PPN have also applied to the People First Credit Union for sponsorship as they have done in previous years.

### **Mick Dowling Memorial Fund Winners**

The Mick Dowling Memorial Fund closed for application on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020. The thirteen applications were then given to the three members of the judging panel. The judging panel were:

- Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Laois County Council
- Jackie Keating, Member of the Dowling Family
- Michael J. Cobbe, Laois PPN Secretariat Member

The winners are as follows:

- Borris in Ossory / Mountmellick Municipal District: Camross Parish Development Association
- Graiguecullen / Portarlinton Municipal District: Portarlinton Social Services (Meals on Wheels)
- Portlaoise Municipal District: Laois Tour Guides Forum

The winning group in each Municipal District will receive €1,000 each. Dan will phone the winning groups tomorrow and Ailish will release the information in our newsletter next week. Paddy Buggy and Vincent Booth congratulated the winners.

### **Mick Dowling Walk**

The Mick Dowling Memorial Walk took place on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October on the Ridge of Cappard, Slieve Bloom mountains, on Mick's first anniversary. There were two groups of walkers led by Shane Dowling of the Dowling family and Trudy Carmody of Laois Tour Guides Forum. Attendees were treated to refreshments after the walk. There was huge interest in the walk and talk of making it an annual event. This was agreed by the Secretariat as a great idea and was proposed by Paddy Buggy and seconded by John Oxley.

The Dowling family told Dan Bergin that it was Mick's wish to have signage in the Slieve Blooms on a walk called 'Monicknew'. The three signs would be

1. Flora and Fauna
2. History of the Area
3. Folklore

The cost of the signage would be around €2,500.

The Secretariat thought this was a wonderful idea. The Secretariat agreed with this and want the signage to have a picture of Mick on it and that it should say "sponsored by Laois PPN". Paddy noted how the initial 3 signs could be used as a template to be built on in future years.

This was proposed by Paddy Buggy and seconded by Donal O' Shea. The Secretariat would like a proof of the signage before production.

### **Online Elections**

There are 5 seats to be filled on the Secretariat and 5 seats on other boards and committees to be filled. There is also one seat to be filled on the Midlands Regional Drink and Alcohol Task Force. It was suggested that the filling of some of the positions be postponed until 2021 but as Dan is already working on designing the forms with the first one going out next week, the Secretariat agreed to go ahead with the online elections.

### **MRPPN Meeting**

The Midland Region Public Participation Network meetings normally take place in person with the last meeting having been held in February. The first meeting of the MRPPN since

February is scheduled to take place on 18<sup>th</sup> November via Zoom. Two Secretariat Members can attend this meeting along with Dan as the Resource Worker. Each PPN can put forward one item on the agenda. John Oxley and Donal O' Shea would like to represent Laois PPN at this meeting with the item for the agenda to be decided.

### **Plenary & MD Meetings**

Each PPN must hold two Plenaries throughout the year. Laois PPN held their first Plenary in February 2020. The second one is usually held towards the end of the year. The PPN should also hold three Municipal District Plenaries. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will not be able to hold these Plenaries in person. Dan suggested as solution that Laois PPN could hold these Plenaries via Zoom / Teams or Teleconference. This was agreed by the Secretariat. It was also suggested that we hold the municipal district plenary in association with a pillar (Community, Social Inclusion, Environment). After discussion it was agreed not to proceed with this as some Groups may not attend if the topic is not of interest to them. Dan suggested that these be held in early December. This was proposed by John Oxley and seconded by Ann Fleming.

### **Upcoming Events**

Due to the Government restrictions which are in place until 2<sup>nd</sup> December, our upcoming events will be held online.

- **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November – Building your 2021 Fundraising Strategy (2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop).** Due to the high levels of interest in the first workshop, we have decided to hold a second workshop with Kevin Delaney of Academy Street Workshop via Zoom.
- **Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> – Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November – Social Inclusion Week.** Laois PPN will hold three online events as a celebration of cultural diversity and inclusion. Events to be confirmed.

### **Any Other Business:**

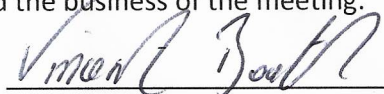
- **Community Centre Update**– Michael Cobbe updated the Secretariat regarding the Community Centres. Only 7 community centres are registered with Laois PPN and from talking to people and driving around the locality there are around 21 community centres not registered with the PPN. Some of these community centres are abandoned or may not have a committee in place. Michael is hoping with Ailish's help to get the names or contact details of someone involved with these community centres and hopefully encourage them to get back up and running and register with Laois PPN.
- **National PPN Handbook** – The Department of Rural and Community Development will launch the National PPN Handbook on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November at 11.00am via Zoom. The National PPN 2019 Annual Report will also be launched at this event. The Department would like one member of the Secretariat to attend this event. Donal O'

Shea as the National Secretariat Representative would like to attend on behalf of Laois PPN.

- **Volunteer Laois** – Conor Ganley of Volunteer Laois is looking for Laois PPN to fill a seat on the Volunteer Laois Board. This will be up and running in the first quarter of 2021 when they have their framework in place. The Secretariat would like to postpone this item until a later meeting of the Secretariat. Dan will attend on behalf of Laois PPN and update the Secretariat.
- **Community Call Helpline** – Carmel McNicholl, SEO of the Community Section of Laois County Council asked if the PPN staff could help with the Community Call Sunday Helpline. The Secretariat agreed that Ailish would be available for the helpline, while Dan would continue to prioritise the PPN events and work of Laois PPN.
- **Muintir na Tire**– Conor O’ Leary of Muintir na Tire has asked Laois PPN, An Garda Siochana and Laois County Council to attend a meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November in relation to Community Alert. Laois County Council have declined to partake in it. Only one Muintir na Tire group and 23 Community Alert groups are registered with Laois PPN. The Secretariat decided to decline the invitation this time and may review involvement with Muintir na Tire in the future.
- **New Chairperson** – The Secretariat had to choose a new chairperson for the next three meetings. Vincent Booth proposed John Oxley and this was seconded by Michael Cobbe. Vincent Booth, outgoing chairperson thanked the Secretariat for the opportunity to hold the position of chairperson.
- **Next Secretariat Meeting** – It was suggested that the next meeting of the Secretariat take place around the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of November, with Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November at 7pm being the provisional date and time.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

  
Chairperson

Date:

26 / 11 / 2020