

# NATIONAL PPN CONFERENCE 2022

## LAOIS



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development

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# Introduction

Laois welcomed nominated delegates from 31 Public Participation Networks (PPNs) representing 18,000 PPN member groups from across Ireland for the National PPN Conference 2022.

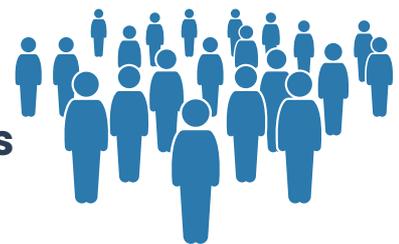
The National PPN Conference was organised by Laois PPN in collaboration with Laois County Council and the DRCD.

**All 31 PPN'S  
Represented**



**Over 220  
Attendees**

**18,000  
Member Groups  
Represented**



# Opening Speeches

**This two-day event saw hundreds of nominated delegates warmly welcomed to Laois by Conference Chairperson and Laois PPN Secretariat member Paddy Buggy, Mary Hurley Secretary General of the Department of Rural & Community Development, Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council Thomasina Connell and Donal Brennan Director of Services Laois County Council.**

## **Paddy Buggy - Conference Chairperson & Laois PPN Secretariat member**

'Dia dhaoibh. Is chúis mór áthais dom fáilte a chur roimh gach duine daoibh chuig Port Laoise, agus Ostán Midlands Park ar an ócáid speisialta seo, 'sé sin, an ceathrú Comhdháil Rannpháirtíochta Poiblí Náisiúnta.



Ba mhaith liom fáilte a chur roimh ár gcomhoibri ón Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail, ár gcomhpháirti ó Chomhairle Chontae Laoise, agus roimh sibhse, ár ndealagáidí ó ghach chontae in Éirinn.

Tá súil againn go mbainfidh sibh taitneamh as an gcomhdháil seo, agus as na tionscnaimh poiblí éagsúla a bhfeicfidh sibh níos déanaí inniú.

Good Morning, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Laois and the Midlands Park Hotel for the 4th National Public Participation Conference. I would like to welcome our colleagues from the Department of Rural and Community Development, our colleagues from Laois County Council and you our delegates from every county in the Republic of Ireland. We hope that you will enjoy this conference and the many community projects which you will see later today.

Many hours have gone into preparing this event, our first in person conference for several years, and I would like to thank all those involved from the Department, Laois County Council, the NAG and Laois PPN for their many contributions. Today it is great to be part of a conference which is dedicated to building on the many positive achievements of the PPN, achievements which we can be both proud of and learn from.

You will see from the agenda that we have packed a lot into our conference with our focus being on moving forward in a positive manner which benefits both ourselves as volunteers and our communities and fosters greater collaboration between organisations. Enjoy the conference and your time in Laois '

## Mary Hurley Secretary General, Department of Rural & Community Development

'It is my great pleasure to be here today for the fourth National PPN Conference hosted by Laois PPN in partnership with Laois County Council. It is so wonderful to be here, at the first in-person event in 3 years.

I would first like to thank Laois PPN for all their hard work in organising this Conference. Laois took on this event at short notice but also with great enthusiasm and positivity. My colleagues in DRCD have informed me you have been a pleasure to deal with. I would also like to thank Laois County Council for their invaluable backing of this event.

Events like this don't just happen by themselves. While they take organising, time, money and a lot of effort. But they are worth it because they come about primarily in response to a need and a genuine desire by participants to learn from each other, share experiences and gain the where with-all to better their PPN and communities. We have missed out on so many events over the past 2 years- it makes being here today all the more special. Those of you here today who have taken the time out to be part of this event are to be commended.

When I think of communities, I think of the people involved, each contributing in their own unique way to the society of which we are justifiably proud. Rightly so, it is the people who are at the core of everything we do. The PPNs bring people together at grassroots level, to bring attention to the issues that affect the citizens in our communities. The PPNs, in partnership with Local Authorities and County Councils, play an important role in allowing citizens voices to be heard.



The past 2 years, during the Covid-19 Pandemic, were a challenging and uncertain time for our country. The PPNs and their member groups played a vital role at local level in responding to this difficult time. You were pivotal in organising the community response and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people in our society. More recently over the past 8 months the PPNs have been on hand once again to help those affected by the war in Ukraine. The Community Response Forum was repurposed in each local authority area, to enable all involved at a local level to work together to support the integration of displaced Ukrainians. PPNs been greatly involved with this, along with many other initiatives to assist the Ukrainian people to feel welcome and supported across the country. I wish to take this opportunity to applaud your work. To everyone involved in the PPN, resource and support workers, the local authorities, the secretariat and member groups- your dedication to help those in your community is truly admirable.

And I want to assure you that the Department of Rural and Community Development remains fully committed to supporting PPNs to achieve their potential. We will continue to provide a range of supports to underpin PPNs, beyond that of the provision of core funding. Among other strands, this includes providing bespoke training for PPN stakeholders. We are also currently working on a communications campaign, to promote the PPN on a local and national level, bringing awareness to the wider community.

As you know, in June of this year Mazars Review of Public Participation Networks was published. This review was 18 months in the making and involved extensive participation from the PPN Community- for which we are very grateful. Following the publication of the report, DRCD invited stakeholders to submit a 'written call for input'. This gave stakeholders an opportunity to voice their views on the report, which we were very eager to hear.

Now we are focused on looking to the future, at how we can make the PPNs stronger, more efficient, and at the support structures we need to put in place to make that easier to achieve. The Department, along with the PPN community, is dedicated to developing an implementation roadmap that all PPNs can get behind and implement. Our shared aim is the continued growth of PPNs, and we are all on this journey together.

At this point I would like to direct some words of thanks to the members of the National Advisory Group for their work and collaboration with the Department in supporting the development of PPNs. Your wealth of knowledge, experience and above all your application of common sense, are so highly valued.

Another group going from strength to strength is the Secretariat Network. The network provides such an important input into the ongoing developments of PPNs. I thank you all for your valuable input and the time you give on a voluntary basis.

I would also like to say a special thanks to the Resource and Support Workers of every PPN, and to their Network. You have shown nothing but resilience, especially over the past two years. Keeping member groups connected and supported- you have kept the show on the road as they say. Thank you all for your hard work and dedication.

I must say, the PPN has come such a long way since it was established in 2014. The PPNs have on numerous occasions brought the voices of the local community sector – the volunteers on the ground – into national policy matters. They were, for example, a key consultation partner in advance of the national Climate Action Plan in 2021, and have also been taking part in the 'Climate Conversations 2022'.

I'd also like to mention some recent achievements and initiatives from PPNs that demonstrate how they can bring the community sector's voice to the policymaking table:

- Clare PPN has consulted with local communities to develop an anti-poverty strategy for County Clare, which was covered on national media and which will feed into their work on committees as well as in written consultations.
- Cavan PPN has shown great initiative in welcoming a youth member onto its Secretariat to bring the voice of the upcoming generation into its operations.
- Galway County PPN has established Galway Disability Forum to drive real change at local level on issues concerning disability. The PPN held a disability-related event in 2020 which made clear that there was demand for such a structure. The PPN recognised and responded to that bottom-up need. They are taking the concerns of the disabled to the policy table, advocating for disability-friendly housing on a local SPC.
- Tipperary PPN collaborated with their local authority to hold two webinars for the community sector to discuss the draft County Development Plan. They advised their community groups on how to make a submission on the plan and to understand the process behind submissions, helping groups to

This is only a small sample of what PPNs are bringing to local democracy – there are many more examples out there across the country. The number of initiatives underway really shows that the PPNs are flourishing. This weekend is about celebrating and sharing your achievements with one another.

We as a Department are also committed to a participative approach to working with the sector more broadly. Collaboration and partnership working are a key component in our work.

The five-year strategy for the community and voluntary sector, now in its third year, commits to supporting participative and deliberative approaches, including the establishment of a new Civic Forum for dialogue at national level. We have also launched a guidebook for the government sector containing Values and Principles for Collaboration and Partnership-Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector at a Local and National Level. These will form a constructive starting point from which to build meaningful processes for dialogue and collaboration at all levels. Continued collaboration between the sector and the state is key to ensuring the best outcomes for, and the active participation of, all in our communities.

To conclude, I hope you all have a very informative two days here in Laois. This weekend is a time to celebrate all the positives. So enjoy the workshops, which I am sure will be informative and inspirational. Enjoy the wonderful excursions this afternoon and the all-important networking with each other. Having to stay apart for so long, it's now finally time to meet people face to face, not just over zoom! There is no better way to learn and get good ideas to bring back to your own PPN, than to experience the success of others. Have a wonderful weekend.'



## Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, Cllr. Thomasina Connell

'As Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to Laois this morning. The large number of attendees representing all 31 PPNs in the Country marks the significance and importance of this conference. Over the course of the two days, you will have the opportunity to network, share knowledge and best practice, visit and see first hand some of the fantastic work of PPN member groups in our County. I really hope that even though your stay is short you will get a taste of what our wonderful County is all about.'

The Councillors of Laois work with Laois PPN Representatives on a variety of Council Committees including the LCDC, SPCs and JPC for the benefit of the people of Laois.

This national event has been months in the planning with Laois County, Laois PPN and the DRCD working on a collaborative basis to bring you all here today.

As a County we are immensely proud how we work together to make Laois a great place to live, work and visit.'



## Donal Brennan Director of Services, Laois County Council



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE  
PRESENTATION](#)



'Welcome to Laois! It is my pleasure today to follow on from the Cathaoirleach's words and to further welcome you all here today.

As our business website [www.connect2laois.ie](http://www.connect2laois.ie) says *"Ireland's Strategically Best Placed County for Doing Business"* As those who travelled here will have found out we are centrally located to host events such as this conference here today.

I want to talk briefly about P's, not the vegetable peas!

But rather some Ps – as in the letter P.



The first P is for the **Electric Picnic**. Laois is the Home of the Electric Picnic. Each year we host an additional population almost equivalent to Galway City.

Laois is home to the National Ploughing Association headquarters. This year Laois was the venue for the **National and World Ploughing championships**. We as a county catered for the equivalent of the population of Limerick City each day. Over and above our existing population. Even though the conference today is not a large as the Ploughing Championship. You collectively represent PPNs and PPN constituent organisations and communities with a membership greater than any Picnic or Ploughing. That is why your voice here today is so important.

The final P is the logo of Laois County Council, *i bpáirt leis and bpobal* 'In **partnership with the community**'. The existence of the PPN really helps the Council in fulfilling that mission. I want to pay tribute to the PPN here in Laois proactively engage with the Council across a range of issues. And speak frankly to us when necessary.



*Electric Picnic*



*National Ploughing & World Ploughing Championships*



*i bpáirt leis and bpobal ' - In **partnership** with the community*

There is a selection of four field trips today. I hope everyone gets to go on one today. To my mind what these trip venues have in common is that each in their own way. Celebrates Community Effort and achievement.

With that all I have left to say is enjoy yourselves today and tomorrow in Laois. We look forward to you individually returning again –Whether for business or for pleasure.

Go raibh maith agaibh'

# Presentations

Over the course of the two days delegates attended a variety of presentations and workshops on:



**Success of the PPNs:  
"Supporting Communities –  
Community Response Forum"**

**Represent App**



**PPN Structural Review  
Implementation Roadmap**

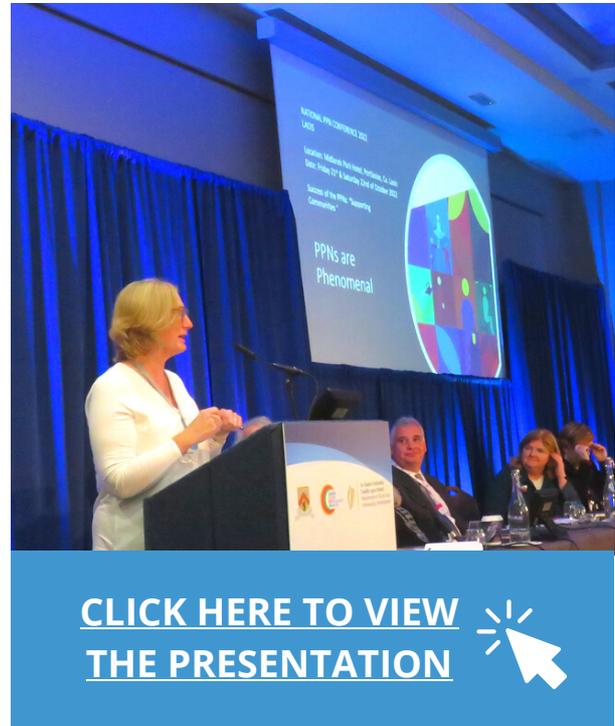
**Positives of the PPN**



**Beta Projects**

# Success of the PPNs: “Supporting Communities – Community Response Forum”

Presented by Dan Bergin – Laois PPN & Siobhan Griffin – Kerry PPN.



The presentation detailed the integral role PPNs had played in supporting communities during Covid 19. The Laois presentation was prepared and presented by Dan Bergin. The Kerry presentation was prepared by Caroline Toal and presented by Siobhan Griffin.



**Facilitator: Joe Cunningham**

Chief Executive of LOETB (Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board).

***PPN'S ARE PHENOMENAL***



# Represent App

**Presented by Nina Horan, Laois PPN Secretariat Member**



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE PRESENTATION](#) 

Represent App presentation explained how innovative technology could be used to engage youth participation on policy making.



**Facilitator: Joe Thompson**

Current Chairperson of LCDC in Laois, heavily involved working with the youth

***BE PRESENT IN THE PARTNERSHIP*** 

# PPN Structural Review Implementation Roadmap

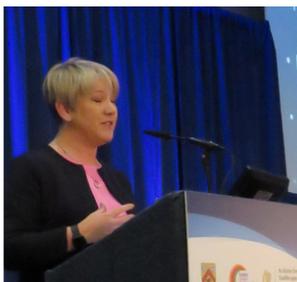
Presented by Aoife O'Brien and Elaine Jennings of DRCD



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE PRESENTATION](#)



This workshop looked at developing a road map to further strengthen the PPN structures. Notes from the workshop will be shared with Working Group and published on DRCD website



**Facilitator: Georgina Ireland**

First Resource Worker of Laois PPN,  
currently SEO in Laois County Council

# Positives of the PPN

Presented by Charles Stanley-Smith, NAG & Tipperary PPN Secretariat



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE PRESENTATION](#)

The positives of the PPN presentation focused on the fundamentals that have contributed to the success of PPNs to date.



**Facilitator: Annette Barr Jordan**  
SEO in Westmeath County Council and  
Liaison Officer for Westmeath PPN

***REMEMBER THE BASICS***

# Beta Projects

Presented by Shane Waring of Dublin City Council.



The Beta Project focuses on Community purposed solutions to address local issues on a trial basis.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE PRESENTATION](#)



**Facilitator: Peter O'Neill**

Current Chairperson of Laois Partnership  
and former Chairperson of Laois GAA.

# Excursions

Showcasing the fantastic work of a selection Laois PPN member groups delegates from across the Country were delighted to select from 1 of 4 excursions.

## Mountmellick Embroidery & Heritage Museum and Yarn Bombing Mountmellick

Mountmellick Embroidery and History Museum is a captivating experience bringing to life the magical art of Mountmellick Embroidery, a specialist craft unique to the town and entirely Irish in origin and design.





Yarn Bombing Mountmellick transform everyday objects into woolly works of art.

Guests were treated to the magical fun and amazing colour that this community group brings to their beloved town, with a special Halloween themed display.



# Camross Parish Development Association & Bloom HQ Mountrath

Guests were brought on a tour of The Village Park, a community led project in Camross. The Village Park includes a walkway, playing pitches, seating, a community garden, courtyard and hub. The Village Park officially opened on October 31st.





Bloom HQ in Mountrath is a former convent has been repurposed and transformed into a state-of-the-art remote working hub. Bloom HQ benefits the community as a remote working hub and social amenity.



## Abbeyleix Bog Project

Considered one of the leading conservation projects in the Country, Abbeyleix Bog Project is a community led conservation project covering almost 500 acres and is a treasure throve of biodiversity. Guests were given a guided walk and talk along the gravel paths and board walk.





# Portlaoise Tidy Towns Walking Tour and the Portlaoise Plane

A walking tour of Portlaoise led by Portlaoise Tidy Towns. The group learned of the transformative work undertaken by Portlaoise Tidy Towns in collaboration with Laois County Council, which contributed to them being an IBAL winner in 2021.

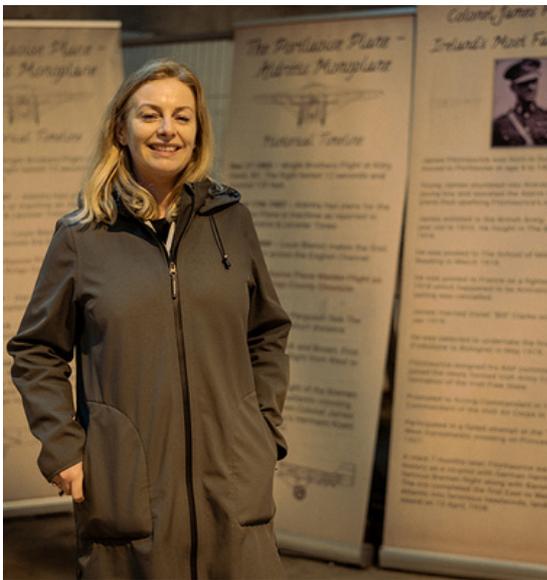
Portlaoise will become Ireland's first low carbon town.





A guided tour of the Portlaoise Plane by National Heritage award winner for 2022 Teddy Fennelly.

The Portlaoise Plane was the first airplane to be flown in what is now the Republic of Ireland and was constructed in Portlaoise.



# Gala Dinner

## Opening Speech - Paddy Buggy Conference Chairperson & Laois PPN Secretariat member



'Minister, Deputies, Cllrs, Department Officials, County Council Officials, fellow delegates and our facilitators of the events this afternoon you are all very welcome to our Gala Dinner. I hope by now you have savoured a little piece of Laois, our scenery, our communities, our food, our passion for making this a great county to live in, to visit and to hold national events in such as ours here tonight.

Earlier this autumn Laois hosted the Electric Picnic attracting 80,000 visitors, followed shortly after that with the National and World Ploughing Championships attracting 277,000 visitors, culminating with tonight, slightly smaller gathering but the same principals apply of agencies and organisations working together to ensure successful events, conferences and corporate events in this lovely county of Laois be they held outdoors or indoors in great facilities such as the Midlands Park Hotel or in the many other locations we are fortunate to have.

Speaking of the Midlands Park Hotel I would like to thank the Management and the whole Hotel Team for their great support and dedication in making our conference a great success. This conference has been about building on the success of the PPN and it's member organisations and I would like to thank those Laois member organisations for show casing their projects this afternoon.

I also want to thank the National Organising Committee comprising of Members of the Department of Rural and Community Development, Laois County Council, the PPN NAG and Laois PPN with a special thank you to Dan Bergin and Diane Seale.

Tonight, our special guest is Minister Joe O'Brien, Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development with special responsibility for Community Development and Charities since July 2020. Previously Minister O'Brien held a seat on Fingal County Council before being elected as a TD to represent Dublin Fingal in 2019. He was subsequently re-elected to that position in February 2020 before being appointed to his current role.

Before entering politics, Minister O'Brien worked with young people at risk and worked for more than a decade at Crosscare in the area of migrant rights. For three years before entering the Dáil Minister O'Brien worked for the Immigrant Council of Ireland.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to welcome our guest speaker Minister Joe O'Brien.



# Minister Joe O'Brien's Address to National PPN Conference

I am delighted to be here in Portlaoise this evening on the occasion of the fourth National Public Participation Network Conference. It is a particular pleasure to be here with you in person after the difficult two years we have just had, when there were so few opportunities for us all to see each other and enjoy events like these.

I would like to congratulate Laois PPN for organising this event on behalf of the PPN National Advisory Group, ably assisted by their partners in Laois County Council. You have done a wonderful job. Thank you for inviting me to address you all here this evening.



I will do my best to keep this quite short, as I am very conscious that at events like this after a busy day, people need to sit back and relax. I'm sure you all have a lot of catching up with each other to do too!

I can't let this opportunity go by, however, without congratulating you all on the sterling work you have continued to do and the new commitments you have taken on in your local areas since the last PPN conference took place in 2019.

PPNs are key partners in local decision making and are increasingly becoming the 'go-to' in terms of community engagement. After all, who knows better than the citizens at the heart of our communities what is best for our communities and how to work together to achieve positive outcomes.

Despite the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions required to safeguard public health, 2020 and 2021 have both been

years of growth and development for the PPNs. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted just how necessary and vital the Community and Voluntary sector is. And the PPNs played a key role, responding swiftly and effectively to make sure there were extensive and varied community supports in place across the country. Your local knowledge was key to understanding and delivering the information, support and practical solutions to the people in your areas who were experiencing need. You also identified the gaps and brought the community voice to the table to ensure no one was left behind.

And you have continued your contribution this year, when war hit in Ukraine and we began to welcome thousands of new arrivals to Ireland. We called on you again and you rose to the challenge once more.

There are so many examples of the excellent work by the PPNs and their member groups to assist the response in their local areas – coordinating information and resources, taking part in local Community Response Fora, working with partners in the community to help support Ukrainian arrivals and providing a network for the delivery of much-needed services on the ground. Your work was and continues to be an example of how much we can achieve when we work together.



Minister Joe O'Brien with Fingal Delegates



Aoife O'Brien, Ciara Bates & Elaine Jennings representing DRCD

PPNs are partnerships, partnerships that involve a wide and diverse range of people. They also involve relationships with local authorities, elected representatives, Government Departments and others, and all of us come together to support the work of the Network. This evening, though, I want to make special mention of the volunteers whose commitment is at the very heart of the PPNs.

No doubt many of you here this evening started on your PPN journey by 'just lending a hand' in your local community centre or sports club. Or maybe you decided to get involved because you saw a need in your area that you were determined to fill, or an opportunity to make a difference that you couldn't pass up.

What you all have in common is that you are engaged and passionate about the communities you live in, that you want to influence what should be happening in those communities, and that you want to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Volunteering is at the very core of PPNs. I have the utmost respect and admiration for all of you who voluntarily give up your time to make a difference. To me, volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. We vote in elections once in a while, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.

I know how important participative democracy is to everyone involved in PPNs. The partnerships we have built in the years since the PPNs were first established in 2014 have been crucial in the success of the public participation networks – whether they are between Local Authorities and PPNs, between local and national structures like my own Department, or between the member groups in an area.

We can achieve so much when we work together in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. Sometimes it's worth taking a step back and reminding ourselves that in spite of the different structures we work within, we are all focused on the same goal: Citizen Engagement leading to participative democracy. I think we all agree that citizens – our families, friends and neighbours – have a right to have a say in local government decisions that affect them, their lives and the wellbeing of their communities.





Ultimately, we are all working to do what we can to ensure the concept of citizen engagement not only succeeds, but thrives. While we may sometimes have our differences, we have a common purpose. In working to achieve that, I think we can leave our differences aside and instead focus on the many people we can empower by enabling their voices to be heard.

In speaking about working towards a common purpose, I want to mention one of our most significant shared priorities, the review of PPN structures. The publication of Mazars report on the Structural Review of the Public Participation Network marked an important development earlier this year. I want to thank you all again for taking the time to participate in and contribute to the review – a process which I know you are continuing to work with us on as we move towards developing an implementation roadmap that ensure the appropriate structures are in place for PPNs to thrive. I understand there was a very productive session on this before lunch today and I know the results of your discussions will be considered as we develop the roadmap.

We know from the Report that PPNs give communities access to decision makers that would not otherwise be possible. They provide a voice for communities in local decision-making and create strong relationships between stakeholders. PPNs also deliver ongoing communication, engagement and information-sharing.



However, the feedback Mazars gathered in the review also showed us that there are areas that could be improved. Our work in the coming months will focus on putting in place positive actions that will address areas such as the visibility, understanding and awareness of PPNs; clarity around roles and responsibilities; exploring the recruitment and retention of a diverse range of members and representatives; and challenges around staffing.

As I know you were discussing earlier, my Department and I want to collaborate with you to develop an implementation roadmap to guide any changes needed, to ensure that PPNs can fulfil the role envisaged for them in 2014. I want to stress that we are not limited to the recommendations made by Mazars in their structural review report. We are open to other ideas and recommendations prompted by your experiences and expert knowledge.

The level of input which you have all contributed to date speaks to the passion and energy of all of you involved in the PPNs. And I hope we can continue to draw on that energy and channel it positively to make sure PPN structures are the best they can be, and fully enabling of participative democracy and local engagement across Ireland.

My team in the Department and I have a serious belief in the good that people involved in the PPNs are doing – the members, the Secretariats and the staff. We can see the lengths you go to to achieve results for your communities, as well as the time, dedication and commitment you consistently apply in making PPNs part of the fabric of our communities. And I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and recognise the input of so many into what I certainly see as the Public Participation success story.

I know it's a success story not only because of the strength of your engagement and the huge turnout for this conference, but also because of the levels of engagement every day across the country. In 2020, the PPN Annual Report found that 17,530 member organisations were affiliated to PPNs. That figure represents thousands and thousands of people – friends, family members and neighbours – all under the umbrella of the PPN network. As I speak here today, I'm told that figure has now increased to over 18,000 member groups. So in spite of the challenges you may have been discussing earlier and whatever some may think, our PPNs are thriving and are at the heart of local and community matters.



From my own perspective and that of my Department, one clear message I would like you all to take away from this conference is that we will continue our support of PPNs into the future. I believe that my Department has a record of demonstrating that we are fully supportive of PPNs and we will continue that support in the years to come. I am aware that current economic circumstances are challenging, and the rising cost of living is causing difficulties for the PPNs as for so many others. However, I think the development of the Implementation Roadmap gives us the opportunity to set out the way forward, and identify the resources and supports needed to get there.

And in that context, I would like to end on a positive note, by letting you know that I have secured additional funding in 2023 for PPNs to alleviate some of the challenges of the rising costs which many of you have brought to my attention. I do hope that through the development of Roadmap, we can clearly identify the additional supports required for the PPNs and work towards putting them in place.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the Conference and embrace the opportunity to meet up in person, to build connections, and share and learn from each other's experiences.

Thank you"

***I HAVE SECURED ADDITIONAL  
FUNDING IN 2023 FOR PPNs***



# Conference Closing

## **Paddy Buggy - Conference Chair and Laois PPN Secretariat Member**

I wish to thank Minister Joe O'Brien for his Department's continued support of the PPNs and the welcome news of additional funding for 2023.

This Conference was our first in person conference since pre Covid. It was a privilege for Laois PPN to be chosen to host The National PPN Conference for 2022. This event has been months in the planning in collaboration with Laois County Council and the DRCD. Laois PPN wish to thank Laois County Council for their support in bringing the National PPN Conference to our wonderful County. I also wish to thank the DRCD for their support in our hosting of this event. Over the two days we interacted with our colleagues from across the Country discussing the many positives of the PPN, the road map for the way forward and exploring new innovations. PPNs play an integral part in supporting communities and working in collaboration with key stakeholders such as Local Authorities to enhance the quality of life in the Counties we live in.



Laois PPN wish to thank, Mountmellick Embroidery and Heritage Museum, Yarn Bombing Mountmellick, Camross Parish Development Association, Bloom HQ, Abbeyleix Bog Project, Portlaoise Tidy Towns and The Portlaoise Plane for their participation in making our National Conference a success and showcasing the amazing work of our Community Groups.

A special thank you to Diane Seale, Laois PPN Support Worker and Dan Bergin Laois PPN Resource Worker on their organisation, creativity and attention to detail which helped ensure the success of the National PPN Conference 2022.

Thank you to the hundreds of delegates for attending and participating. We are immensely proud of our County. We look forward to welcoming back in the future to experience more of what our wonderful County has to offer."



Donal O'Shea (Laois PPN Secretariat), Ann Fleming (Laois PPN Secretariat), Vincent Booth (Laois PPN Secretariat), Diane Seale (Laois PPN Support Worker), Nina Horan (Laois PPN Secretariat), Minister Joe O'Brien, Donal Brennan (Director of Services, Laois County Council), Paddy Buggy (Conference Chairperson & Laois PPN Secretariat), Dan Bergin (Laois PPN Resource Worker) , Bolaji Adeyanju (Laois PPN Secretariat)

# Read All About It

The National PPN Conference received extensive coverage from the local media both in print and online. A special thanks to Leinster Express/Laois Live, The Nationalist and Laois Today.



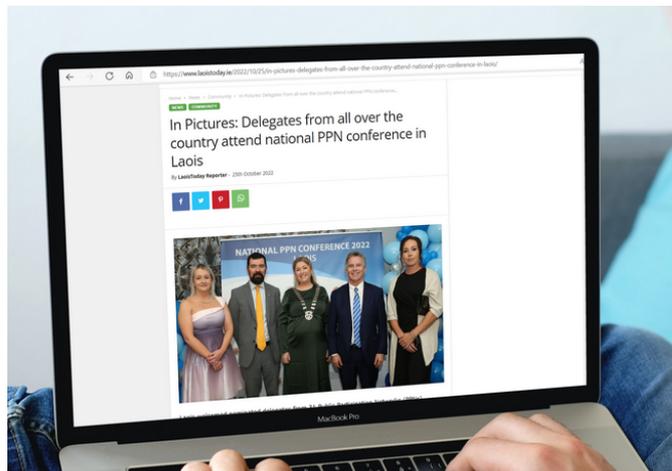
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# Feedback



**Joe O'Brien TD for Dublin Fingal** ✓ @joefingalgreen · Oct 21 ...  
Amazing buzz at Public Participation Network Annual Conference in Portlaoise this evening. First in person gathering since 2019. 100s of volunteers who care about their communities gathering to reconnect & plot the next chapter of PPNs nationally @The\_Wheel\_IRL @SocialJusticeI



**Ailís Ní Chofaigh** @Aily\_NC · Oct 21  
Talking about the benefits supporting #Communities - one of my favourite topics 🙌 with @joefingalgreen & @limerick\_ppn's Lorraine Broderick.

#NationalPPNConference



↳ Kildare PPN Retweeted



**PurityBelleBlog** @PurityBelle · Oct 21 ...  
Had a great day at the #NationalPPNConference with fellow Secretariat Reps @lizdenieffe and @nerdynomers. Wonderful tour of @abbyleixbog and brilliant to chat to so many people who are passionate about inclusion and participation. Also great hospitality from @LaoisPPN!



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**The Wheel** ✓ @The\_Wheel\_IRL · Oct 21 ...  
We're thrilled to be in Laois and to have to opportunity to learn from and share ideas with so many of our peers at the packed National PPN Conference today! 🙌 #NationalPPNConference @JSheehan70

↻ Kildare PPN Retweeted



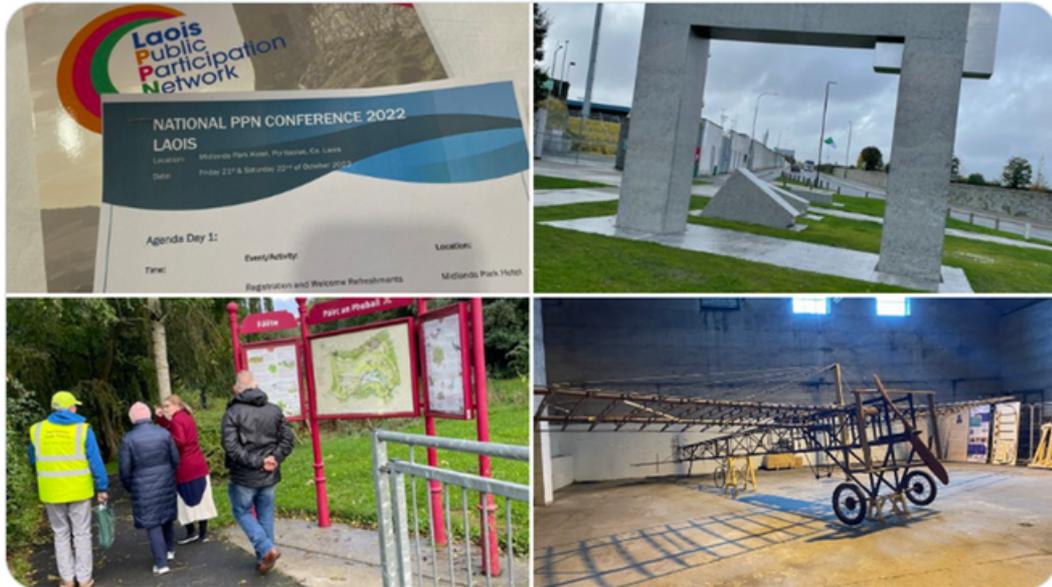
**Liz Denieffe** @lizdenieffe · Oct 23

...

Started a busy few days at #PPN national conference in Portlaoise on Fri. Great to hear the work of PPNs across Irl 🙌.

Great walking tour with Portlaoise Tidy Towns, included seeing the Portlaoise Plane ✈️ (my photo is not doing it justice!)

Thanks #LaoisePPN for hosting 🙌



**Maria Flanagan** @OneFineDay\_ie · Oct 22

...

📖 Delighted to attend the National PPN Conference 2022 over last 2 days on behalf of @an\_cosan with other Reps and Members of @DublinCityPPN lots of learning, networking, grassroots engagement @LaoisPPN #Laois #NationalPPNConference #PPN #SupportingCommunity #ConnectedCommunity



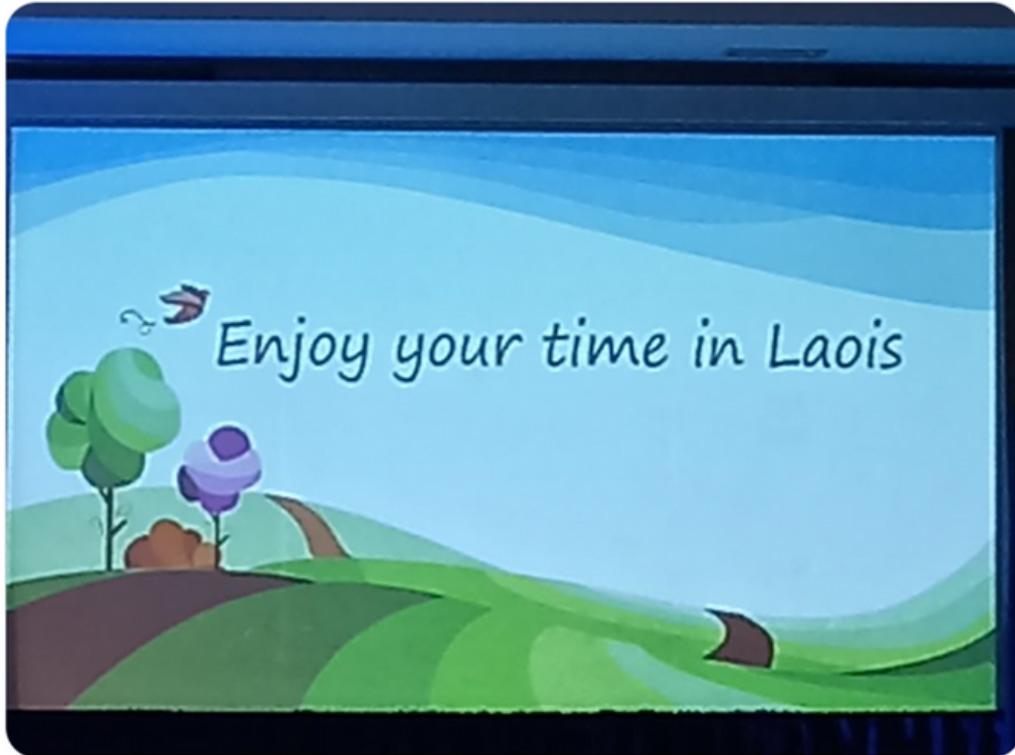


Dublin City PPN @DublinCityPPN · Oct 21



Thanks so much @LaoisPPN for a great day at the National Conference. Great chats, with super people, who are all doing great work!

It's a treat!



Maria Flanagan @OneFineDay\_ie · Oct 22



Minister @joefingalgreen gave a very positive address at #NationalPPNConference

commending the work carried out by PPNs & Communities in recent years in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the arrival of displaced Ukrainians #CommunityDevelopment #PPN [gov.ie/en/press-relea...](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-relea...)





Leitrim PPN @ppnleitrim · Nov 1



Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Joe O'Brien, T.D., addressed the fourth National Public Participation Network Conference. @ppnleitrim

Attended, well done @LaoisCouncil @LaoisPPN for organising a great event.



Maria Flanagan @OneFineDay\_ie · Oct 22



Well done & thank you to hosts @LaoisPPN @LaoisCouncil for showcasing the best of #Laois to a national audience. As someone who has 50% Laois genes was very proud to see the Laois map in pack and the field trips out to Mountmellick, Portlaoise, Mouthwash, Camross and Abbeyleix





**Ailís Ní Chofaigh** @Aily\_NC · Oct 21

Such fantastic hosts 🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌

@LaoisPPN



☀️ **Fiona O'Neill** ☀️ @From\_Fiona · Oct 23



Thank you to @LaoisPPN & the staff of @MidlandsPark for a phenomenally well run conference full of networking opportunities, sharing ideas & learnings.

Here's a quick overview of my time there: 🙌🙌

[instagram.com/reel/CkDSNVkj8...](https://www.instagram.com/reel/CkDSNVkj8...)

@SocialJustice1 #community #socialenterprise



### Cavan Public Participation Network

22 October at 11:29 · 🌐



At the national conference for reps from over 18,000 groups across Ireland we got to undertake local site visits to appreciate the power and beauty of community volunteering.

[Laois Public Participation Network's](#) member groups [Camross](#) and [Bloomhq](#) are vibrant vehicles for community volunteering making our areas better places to call home.



### Galway County PPN @GalwayCoPPN · Oct 21



Delighted to be in Portlaoise attending the **National PPN Conference 2022**

🎉 [#NationalPPNConference](#)





Department of Rural and Community Devel... @Dept... · Oct 21 ...  
 The [#NationalPPNConference](#) is taking place in Portlaoise today.

Our team is looking forward to an interesting and engaging couple of days.  
[@LaoisPPN](#) [@LaoisCouncil](#)

[#SupportingCommunities](#)



Kelley Bermingham @FlutterbyBermo · Oct 21 ...  
[#Dan](#) sharing the winning actions from [@LaoisPPN](#)





Linda Ennis @LindaEnnis31 · Oct 21



4th National PPN conference in Portlaoise today @FingalPPN @Fingalcoco building on the many positive achievements of the PPN & celebrating the work we do @LaoisPPN @DeptRCD #supportingcommunities



Tony McCormack

21 October at 16:54 · 🌐



Delighted to attend the national PPN conference in Portlaoise today on behalf of Offaly County Council. PPN groups were so helpful in helping out in their communities throughout Covid. Well done to all involved and keep up the good work.





**Kelley Bermingham** @FlutterbyBermo · Oct 21



Siobhain from @KerryPPN reinforcing the 'P' pattern of Phenomenal and Powerful PPN Practice



**South Dublin Co PPN** @sdcppn · Oct 21



Great to be at #PPN conference in Portlaoise with all PPNs represented!

[#participation](#)



**Kieran Walsh** @kieransopinion · Oct 21

Replying to @Aily\_NC

Hello from the @sdcppn table!!





Martin Hoey

22 October at 19:37 · 🌐



Was amazing to see this in portlaoise as part of the ppn conference the famous aldritt plane first built and flown in ireland In 1909 and is known as the oldest surviving riginal plane in the UK and ireland



County Wicklow Public Participation Network

22 October at 14:48 · 🌐



The Wicklow team enjoying the learning and networking at the PPN National Conference in Laois. Thank you to everyone that chatted to us and well done to [Laois Public Participation Network](#) and team for organising such a fantastic event. Grainne was there too but kept herself on the other side of the camera 📷





Cavan Public Participation Network

22 October at 11:25 · 🌐



Why are there PPNs? In today's session we explored the reasons and positives behind PPNs, to enhance the voice of communities and compliment the democratic empowerment of Ireland from the grass roots up. The key to this is for communities to get involved in their local PPN and for local Councils and other partners to support and take on these community voices.  
Thanks to [Laois Public Participation Network](#) for hosting the conference with the support of its local partners and @gov.ie (drcd) for support and encouragement.



### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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...te recognises the role of local gover  
...a forum for the democratic represe  
...munities, in exercising and performi  
...ers and functions conferred by la  
...; by its initiatives the interests



Ailís Ní Chofaigh @Aily\_NC · Oct 22



Before Day2 of the [#NationalPPNConference](#), hosted by [@LaoisPPN](#) starts - I just wanted to share this gorgeous guide to their County.

Inspiration to promote [@limerick\\_ppn](#) groups in [#Limerick](#) County's beauty (of which the City sits in 😊) & an added interactive digital version? ❤️





Kilkenny PPN

22 October at 10:45 · 🌐



Great to meet with colleagues and PPN representatives from around the country at our National Conference in Laois .....thanks to [Laois Public Participation Network](#) for being such amazing hosts.

Delighted some of our own reps were able to meet with Minister Joe O'Brien to reinforce the importance of participatory democracy, engagement in and influencing the decision making structure of the Local Authority and other agencies and of course, the valuable work the PPNs do regarding community development and helping to build the capacity of local community groups and organisations

[Kilkenny County Council Kilkenny Covid19 Volunteers](#)



🔄 Cork City Public Participation Network Retweeted



**Kieran O'Connell** @KieranO33406345 · Oct 22



A successful 2022 PPN Conference with [@CorkCityPPN](#) [@CorkCountyPPN](#) [@corkcitycouncil](#) [@Corkcoco](#) Minister [@joefingalgreen](#) The conference highlighted many positive actions and activities created by volunteers and community groups across the country including [@CamrossGAA](#) + & [@HqBloom](#)





*Report compiled by Dan Bergin (Laois PPN Resource Worker)  
and Diane Seale (Laois PPN Support Worker)*