



# Laois Public Participation Network

Minutes of Meeting of PPN Secretariat  
Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021, 7.00pm  
Treo Nua, Portlaoise

Present: Mr. Paddy Buggy - Chair  
Mr. Michael J. Cobbe  
Mr. John Oxley  
Mr. Donal O' Shea

Apologies: Ms. Ann Fleming  
Mr. Vincent Booth  
Mr. Bolaji Adeyanju

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 Tuesday 19th October were proposed by Michael J Cobbe, seconded by Donal O' Shea, confirmed and signed.

## Laois PPN Events

Dan Bergin, Laois PPN Resource Worker gave the Secretariat a brief update on the Laois PPN events that took place during the month of October.

- "Foraging Ramble at Roundwood House" took place on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> October at Roundwood House, Mountrath. The foraging ramble was led by wild food expert Mary Bulfin A.K.A Wild Food Mary. Participants were delighted to learn from Mary about hedgerow herbals, fungi forays, wild edibles and natural remedies while enjoying the beautiful woodland surroundings at Roundwood House. Participants were treated to a delicious packed lunch made with locally sourced products. The attendees of this event were delighted with all the information they had gained and were full of praise for Mary and her amazing knowledge and for Laois PPN for organising such a wonderful event.
- "Ramble at the Rock" was our second event in October. This guided walk of one of Laois' most iconic heritage sites Rock of Dunamase was led by Experiencing Ireland Tour Guide Trudy Carmody. Trudy told the participants of the rich history of the Rock of Dunamase and showed them many of the defensive features the Castle had including curtain wall, barbican gate, murder hole and a moate. Following the ramble, participants were treated to refreshments provided by local business 'Cuddy's Brew'.

## **Laois CONNECTS**

Dan gave the Secretariat members an overview of the Laois CONNECTS events held by Laois PPN. We held two events for Laois CONNECTS.

- The first event was an online event “An Introduction to Self-Harm” which took place on 14<sup>th</sup> October. This event was facilitated by the HSE and the aim was to help people understand Self-Harm and proved to be very popular.
- The second event “An Unexpected Journey to Self-Belief” was an in-person event held in the Manor Hotel, Abbeyleix on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> October. The guest speaker for this event was Rory O’ Connor of Rory’s Stories. Rory is a comedian, author and major mental health advocate with over 1 million followers on social media. On the night Rory told his story – his struggles in school, in work, with a gambling addiction and his own mental health. The boy labelled as thick in school would later find out he is dyslexic, is now a best-selling author. The man who struggled to find a career he could succeed in is now a stand-up comedian selling out venues around Ireland with a social media following of over a million. A gambling addiction which gnawed at this self-esteem, struggling with depression he now uses his social media presence to promote positive mental health, the importance of knowing your own worth and being happy in life. Rory told his story with an honesty and humour that really struck a chord with many in attendance. Participants feedback was extremely positive for this event. The event was viewed as one of the highlights of Laois Connects.

## **JPC Guideline Submission**

As discussed at the previous Secretariat meeting, It was noted that the Draft JPC Guidelines does not currently state that community representation of 25% of the JPC membership should be sourced through the PPN’s. Dan prepared a submission on behalf of Laois PPN proposing that PPN’s are ideally placed to put forward the 25% community representation required.

## **PPN Budget**

Dan briefed the Secretariat as to the state of the Laois PPN Budget.

The budget is currently in good order. We have asked Secretariat and Representatives to submit their travel and subsistence claims in timely manner so they can be taken into account for the budget. The Department of Rural and Community Development has issued new financial controls and these new controls replace last year’s controls. Dan has prepared a submission for the Chief Executives Report The submission details how Laois PPN achieved its 3 key objectives in 2021 as outlined by the Department which are;

- Facilitate participation and representation
- Capacity Building of Member Groups
- Serve as a networking and information hub

This achievement was welcomed by Members of the Secretariat.

John Mulholland, Chief Executive had highlighted in the Chief Executive Report last year on working in collaboration with Laois PPN to support communities. Dan Bergin informed the Secretariat that this had also been achieved in 2021 citing the following examples of collaboration;

- The Community Response Forum
- Community & Voluntary Awards
- Laois Connects
- We're Breastfeeding Friendly Laois
- Smoke Free Playgrounds
- Heritage Week
- Fire Safety Week
- Make Way Day

The work on collaborations with Laois County Council was welcomed by the Secretariat.

The Laois PPN budget has catered training and events for all three pillars of the PPN – Community, Social Inclusion and Environmental.

It was noted by the Secretariat that the Secretariat Members, PPN Reps, Resource Worker and Support Worker were unable to go for a Christmas meal as a thank you for their work due to Covid19. It was proposed by Paddy Buggy that a Christmas Hamper be given to each member of the Secretariat, PPN Reps, Resource Worker and Support Worker as a thank you for their work on behalf of Laois PPN. This proposal was seconded by Michael J. Cobbe.

### **Community and Voluntary Awards 2021**

The deadline for the Community and Voluntary Awards 2021 has been extended until this Friday 19<sup>th</sup> November. Application forms are available from Laois PPN, Laois County Council and online. We would encourage the Secretariat members to talk to the groups in their areas and encourage them to submit entries for the awards. Due to the rising number of Covid-19 cases, this event will now be held online hopefully in January of 2022 with details to be finalised at a later date. Dan has organised the judging to be done by Resource Workers in other PPNs outside of county Laois.

### **Social Inclusion Week**

Laois PPN are holding a Social Inclusion Week for the second year. Taking place from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> December, we are organising a number of events. The first event will be a Tour of Roundwood House and Gardens, followed by Afternoon Tea for our over 55+ age group members. The second event we hope to hold is a Disability Walk at Cashel or Emo followed by refreshments and sweet treats. The third event in planning is a Photography Competition "What Social Inclusion Means To You", with the winning pictures displayed in County Hall and

Laois Gift Cards as prizes. We are also considering an Art Competition in schools under the same heading “What Social Inclusion Means To You”.

Michael J Cobbe suggested that when organising outdoor events we need to consider access to toilets for everyone.

### **Municipal District (MD) and County Plenaries**

It is a requirement of the Department of Rural and Community Development that each PPN hold three MD plenaries and two county plenaries during the year. We held our first county plenary of 2021 on-line in March and it was very successful. The turnout for our on-line plenaries has been very good and we will continue to do them on-line. The Secretariat were in agreement that raffling Laois Gift Cards at each Plenary had positively contributed to a good attendance and that this initiative should be continued. The Secretariat were in agreement that online plenaries with the initiative of a Laois Gift Card raffle represented better value for money for Laois PPN when compared to room hire and refreshments for an in person event. Laois PPN will have five €50 Laois Gift Cards to raffle on the night of each MD plenary and five €100 Laois Gifts to raffle at County Plenary. This was proposed by Paddy Buggy and seconded by John Oxley. Dan asked that one member of the Secretariat from each of the three MD’s put themselves forward to chair the meeting in their MD. Paddy Buggy will chair the Borris in Ossory / Mountmellick MD meeting. Donal O’ Shea will chair the Graiguecullen / Portarlinton MD Meeting and John Oxley will chair the Portlaoise MD meeting. Dan will talk to these Secretariat members individually and discuss the details. The plenaries will take place in December.

### **MRPPN (Midlands Region Public Participation Network) Meeting**

The MRPPN meeting took place on 21<sup>st</sup> October. Laois PPN Secretariat Member John Oxley and Laois PPN Resource Worker Dan Bergin represented our PPN at this meeting. Our topic on the night was Community Centres. John presented a slide show highlighting the use of community centres for a variety of activities from meetings to sports to classes. He showed the challenges that Community Centres face, like costs (heating, insurance, electricity) and compliance (Health and Safety, Fire Alarms). John spoke about the community centres currently registered as members of Laois PPN and how we can encourage them to join the PPN. The other topics covered on the night were:

- Westmeath WPPN Survey(s) Training & Supports
- Offaly – Focus on a Group emerging from Covid19
- Kildare – Training Calendar

### **Disability Participation and Awareness Fund 2021**

Laois PPN along with Laois County Council have been invited to make a joint submission for funding from the Disability Participation and Awareness Fund. The theme Laois PPN are going to use is “Disability Awareness”. We are considering a series of events via Zoom and in-person promoting disability awareness around the county. We will look at engaging keynote speakers from the disability sector also.

**A.O.B.**

- **Rock of Dunamase** – Donal O’ Shea was asking about the development of tourism in Laois. Dan told him that Laois County Council are trying to make the Rock of Dunamase a focal point for tourism in Laois and are currently trying to develop a car park at the site.
- **Community Centres** – John Oxley and Michael Cobbe are very interested in getting as many community centres and halls to register with Laois PPN. Once they have enough community centres and halls on board, they will try to form a Federation of Community Centres similiar to the Tidy Towns Federation here in Laois. It is hoped that a Federation would be able to get better rates on electricity, Insurance etc, for community centres and share information with each other. Ailish to send list of community centres and halls to Michael and John.

The next secretariat meeting will take place in December.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:



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Chairperson

Date: 12/12/2021