

# Public Participation Network in Ireland

## CHANGE! Good practice factsheet

### Title of good practice/initiative

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Public Participation Network. (PPN)



**Description** of the good practice /initiative: history, activities, number of involved people, territorial scope, current scale, future plans, impact and benefits (**Max. 400 words**)

### Background and context

A new framework for public engagement and participation in Ireland called “The Public Participation Network (PPN)” has been developed within each local authority area, to enable the public to take an active formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the Local Authority’s areas of responsibility.

The PPN will be the main link through which the local authority connects with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors without prejudice to other consultation processes. The aim of the structures and processes is to facilitate and enable the public and the organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system, not to reduce or homogenise this diversity. A parallel and equally important aim is to facilitate the local authority in making better and more timely decisions.

The PPN facilitates input by the public into local government through a structure that ensures public participation and representation on decision-making committees and bodies within local government.

For the purpose of this structured public participation within local government, individuals may join an existing group or organisation or they can establish an interest group or organisation and register it with the PPN.

### The PPN objective is to:

- Facilitate the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sectors on decision making bodies
- Strengthen the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion, community & voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate
- Provide information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary sector and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received.

### In particular the role of the PPN is:

1. To contribute to the local authority’s development for the County/City a vision for the well-being

of this and future generations.

2. to facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between environmental, community and voluntary groups and between these groups and the local authority.

3. to identify issues of collective concern and work to influence policy locally in relation to these issues.

4. to actively support inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination, including Travellers to enable them to participate at local and county level and to clearly demonstrate same.

5. to encourage and enable public participation in local decision making and planning of services.

6. to facilitate the selection of participants from the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors onto city/county decision making bodies.

7. to support a process that will feed the broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals of the Network into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers in areas that are of interest and relevant to the Network

8. to work to develop the Environmental, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary sectors so that the work of the sectors is clearly recognised and acknowledged and the sectors have a strong collective voice within the County/City.

### **Current stage of development**

The DLR PPN is at an early stage of development. There are currently 200 Voluntary Community organisations registered as members of the DLR PPN. Our target is to double this within two years.

The PPN has formed a secretariat to drive it's development and is currently working the development of a communication plan and action plan for 2017.

We are currently in the process of recruiting a fulltime Network Manager.

### **Role of the municipality** within the process (e.g. how the municipality facilitates or coordinates the process to systematise/upscale a civic initiative)

The municipality provides a range of supports to this project including:

- Access to meeting space,
- Municipality Liaison officer support,
- Funding for a Network Manager
- Programme funding,
- Administrative support where required.

### **Budget** (in total and municipality's own contribution)

There is an annual budget of €80,000 for the DLR PPN. This is to cover the cost of the Network Manager and the implementation of a set of agreed actions.

### **Key attributes (success factors)** enabling (municipal) staff to implement the project successfully

This new structure is national policy and there is a requirement for Local authorities to engage and develop the PPN structures. There is an openness to exploring the possibilities.

We are still exploring the how best to practically implement the role of the PPN and maximise the opportunities to progress community issues.

DLR has a good history of working with Community and Voluntary Organisations.

There is a good level of voluntary community leadership in DLR.

Key internal, organisational, behavioural **weaknesses** the municipality/organisation had to overcome during the process

This is a new project in our municipality and as such it will take some time for the different Departments of the Municipality to understand this new structure and it's role. The PPN will also have to learn how the Municipality works and makes decisions.

One of the key challenges will be to focus on a small number of actions and issues which can be progressed and not get involved on every issue at every level as this will not be sustainable.

**Links** to website for further information on the good practice/initiative

[www.dlrppn.ie](http://www.dlrppn.ie)