



## Lónraí Rannpháirtíochta Pobail Éireann Public Participation Networks Ireland

National PPN Conference 2025: A Resounding Success in Trim.

Meath Highlights Grassroots Knowledge and Collaboration on 11th Anniversary

TRIM, CO. MEATH – October 16 & 17, 2025

The 2025 National Public Participation Network (PPN) Conference, hosted by Meath PPN and Meath County Council with the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, concluded successfully in Trim, Co. Meath, on October 16th-17th.

Marking the 11th anniversary of PPNs in Ireland, the national gathering brought together over 200 delegates, including PPN representatives from all 31 Local Authority areas, local government officials, and key figures from the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG). The conference theme, "Building Better Communities," provided a powerful platform for sharing best practices and developing collaborative strategies.

Bairbre Nic Aongusa, Assistant Secretary at DRCDG, welcomed every one to Meath for the seventh National PPN Conference by reminding all of the *"wonderful opportunity to bring stakeholders together, to learn from each other, share experiences and gain insight and knowledge to improve their PPN and how they enable volunteer groups to become more civically active, giving local volunteers a greater say in local government decisions"*.



Chief Executive of Meath County Council, Kieran Kehoe, emphasised the network's growing structural role. *"Meath PPN has worked tirelessly to re-establish itself as a gateway of support and connection for over 800 community groups across the county,"* said Mr. Kehoe. *"We have seen a powerful re-engagement, reflected in the number of representatives now sitting on key decision-making bodies like the Strategic Policy*

*Committees, the LCDC, and the Local Community Safety Partnership. This is about ensuring the community voice is not just heard, but listened to, aligning with our simple, clear vision: 'Make Meath Even Better.'*

Cathaoirleach of Meath County Council, Cllr. Wayne Harding, outlined local success stories as a testament to the power of partnership:

Global Recognition: *"Our host town, Trim, is a testament to what's possible when a community and local authority works together. The Trim Tidy Towns group, for example, didn't just win national awards; their success turned into international glory, becoming world champions in the 'Communities in Bloom' competition."*

Inclusion and Environment: The Cathaoirleach also highlighted the incredible work being done by the Trim Family Resource Centre, with its inclusion-themed mural, and the Boyne River Trust for its ongoing conservation efforts.

Reaching the Vulnerable: Delegates heard how Youth Work Ireland Meath's detached youth projects have been recognised at Pride of Place, successfully reaching young people who might otherwise be left behind.

Delegates also heard specific examples of the network's on-the-ground impact, including the rapid, community-led response during Storm Éowyn and the success of the "Louie and Frankie book project"—a local idea nurtured by the PPN to help children understand their emotions.



Key sessions on the first day included a Misinformation Workshop (featuring Ciaran O'Connor of ISD Global and Emily Duffy from Hope and Courage Collective), who presented real-time statistics showing the online rise in mis, dis and mal-information, before sharing empowering methods for how we can constructively and safely challenge these narratives

when we hear them in our communities. Following this, Brian Hora, SEO Community at Meath County Council, shared a promotional video, which showcases how Meath is challenging the myths and supporting integration.

Charles-Stanley Smith then launched the report on Building Community Resilience in Times of Emergency. A comprehensive document which captured all the input from a national summer gathering of PPN delegates in Laois. This report is intended to form the basis for a multi stakeholder collaborative process, to help communities become as resilient and prepared for emergencies as possible.



Andy Ogle, Outgoing-Chairperson of Meath PPN, expressed immense pride in hosting the event. *"This year, marking our 11th anniversary, and in little over a decade, PPNs have evolved from a concept into a powerful, working reality. There is a lot of great work done, but still a lot more to do. But as always, we will rise to the challenge. I am confident that with your continued dedication and passion, we will keep building a stronger, more vibrant PPN network"*.

As collaboration is the key, Andy encouraged those attending to "converse, question and share what is wonderful and working in your community, and together let us build a national example for what true public participation looks like".



Delegates on Thursday enjoyed a selection of five thematic excursions designed to showcase local community, environmental, and heritage initiatives in Meath. Highlights included a visit to Ráth Chairn Gaeltacht, providing insight into this 90-year-old Irish-speaking community and its unique culture. The Porchfields Guided Walk allowed attendees to enjoy the beautiful scenery, biodiversity, and ancient ruins along the River Boyne, while learning about the history of this magical location.



Social inclusion was addressed at the Trim Family Resource Centre, where attendees learned about the community mural project and the vital work of the Trim Community Food Bank. And Solas Glán Community Gardens in Ardbraconn showcased a three-acre, not-for-profit site where people learn, grow, and form friendships through shared knowledge and working with the land, fostering a holistic sense of community spirit.

A major highlight of the conference was the address by Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Jerry Buttimer TD, at the gala dinner and reception on the Thursday evening.

Minister Buttimer used the occasion to remind everyone that *"part of our common goal is making sure that those groups who have historically been overlooked in democratic conversations now have a seat at the table and have their voices heard. PPNs play an important role in helping all the diverse voices in our communities to be heard"*.



The Minister also reaffirmed the commitment from himself and his Department in supporting the work of all 31 PPNs. *"What you have accomplished so far is a powerful reminder of what we can achieve when we work together. Let us keep building on that momentum as we strive to make sure our communities continue to be heard, and our opinions included, in the decisions that impact on our daily lives".*

Additional guests on the evening included Leas-Cathaoirleach of Meath County Council, Caroline O'Reilly, the Chairperson of Meath LCDC Seamus McGee and local MEP Nina Carberry who had just returned from Strasbourg that afternoon.



The second day of the conference focused on knowledge sharing through a series of engaging workshops beginning with a focus on Trim Tidy Towns Circular Economy Strategy. Participants discovered the collaborative arts project Girley Bog Gnáthóga Ná dúrtha (Natural Habitats), including Kate Flood's "The Bog Cabinet" piece exploring the textures and life of Girley Bog, Kells.

Another key presentation was the Tipperary PPN Community Mapping project, "The Power of Place and People," which supports the work of the PPN and County Council by understanding group needs, supporting development, and providing on-the-ground knowledge. Cork City PPN Podcast Series workshop detailed their collaboration with the Cork Community Media Hub team on the 'Have Your Say' podcast, covering aspects like guest speakers and hosting platforms. Finally, Crann Support Group shared their mission to support community childcare services and Social Inclusion Projects through a dedicated shared service arrangement.



Garret O'Brien of Meath PPN Secretariat closed out the 2025 National Conference by reminding everyone *"we must continue to make the pathways to influence easier, break down barriers to participation, and ensure every community group knows how to get their voice to the decision-making table"*.



### *About Public Participation Networks (PPNs)*

Public Participation Networks (PPNs) are the main link through which Local Authorities connect with the community, voluntary, social inclusion, and environmental sectors. Established under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, PPNs ensure that the diverse voices of the community are heard and represented in local government policy and decision-making bodies.

### **Appendices:**

#### **[Presentations](#)**

#### **[Link to Photos](#)**

#### **[Ministers Speech](#)**

#### **[DRCDG](#)**

#### **[Meath PPN Chair](#)**

#### **[Chief Executive](#)**

#### **[Cathaoirleach](#)**

#### **[Closing Remarks](#)**