PPN National Advisory Committee

Date/Time: Wednesday, 28th January 2026 10 am

Venue:
Online- via Teams

Minutes

Attendees:
Pillar representatives:

- Charles Stanley Smith (Environmental Pillar)
- Susanne Rogers (C&V Pillar)
- Louise Lennon (Social Inclusion Pillar)

PPN Secretariat representatives:

- Liam McCarthy (Cork County PPN; C&V representative)
- Maria Heneghan (Galway County PPN, Environmental representative)

PPN Staff representatives:

- Paul Clabby (Roscommon PPN)
- Bridie Costello-Hynes (Offaly PPN)

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage:

- Tim Carey

Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht:

- Jake Ryan (Chair), Aoife O'Brien, Anne-Marie Scannell, Gillian Moore, Peadar O'Dea, Adrian Rafferty

Apologies

- Ann Dillon (CCMA, Offaly County Council)
- Muriel Tobin (PPN Staff, Waterford PPN)
- Kathleen Dowd (PPN Secretariat, Longford PPN*)*

1. Quorum

The Chair noted that the CCMA did not have a representative at this meeting, however as all other stakeholders had representation a quorum was declared and the meeting could proceed.

2. Conflict of Interest

The Chair noted a conflict of interest would arise for item number six '*PPN National Conference';* Paul Clabby will excuse himself from the meeting for this agenda item.

3. Adoption of Minutes of 31st Meeting of Group on 10th September 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th September were raised; there were no matters arising. The Chair asked for any notes to be sent into DRCDG by 30th January, after which the minutes will be taken as agreed.

4. Opening remarks by Chair

The Chair mentioned that this is the first meeting of the group under its new name "National Advisory Committee". The Chair thanked the group for their excellent work on developing the new Terms of Reference for the NAC.

The Chair welcomed the following new members to the group-

- Maria Heneghan from Galway County PPN has taken over as Environmental Representative of the Secretariat Network, replacing Bill Morrell.
- Bridie Costello-Hynes from Offaly PPN is a new PPN Staff representative, replacing Sarah Wetherald.
- Kathleen Dowd has taken over as Social Inclusion Representative for the Secretariat Network replacing Donal O'Shea.
- Tim Carey has joined as a new Representative of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

It was noted that there is a vacancy for a Representative from the CCMA as Michael Nicholson has stepped down. DRCDG has contacted the CCMA in this regard.

The Chair thanked all outgoing members for their work on the group. A special mention was made of Bill Morrell, who passed away in October 2025. Bill will be sadly missed by everyone and will be remembered for his outstanding contribution to the PPN Community.

5. NAC Terms of Reference

The finalised Terms of Reference of the NAC have been agreed and were circulated to the group on 24th November 2025. The next step is to appoint a Vice-Chair, for which a nomination process will be held. The Chair asked any member wishing to be considered for Vice-Chair, to secure a nomination from another member of the group which must be emailed direct to the Chair by 27th February.

The group discussed the next meeting date and agreed that a poll will circulate with date options in March and May. The Department will also circulate polls to identify the remaining meeting dates for 2026.

The Chair asked the group to consider training needs for the group. A suggestion was made for the compilation of a NAC Induction Training Pack, accessed through a shared file, where all NAC related documents (TOR, Minutes, Key docs) could be stored. DRCDG to review and revert on shared file.

It was agreed that sub-groups (including the Implementation Roadmap Working Group) are sub-groups of the NAC. The Annual Report and Handbook sub-group will remain, the Communications sub-group has concluded, with its functions now being looked after by the NAC.

Actions

- Nominations for Vice-Chair to be emailed to Jake.Ryan@drcdg.gov.ie by 27th February
- DRCDG to issue a poll for the next meeting, with option dates in March and May
- DRCDG to issue polls to identify further meeting dates for the remainder of the year
- DRCDG to investigate if a shared file could be used for sharing of an Induction Pack of NAC-related documents

6. Discussion on *Barriers to Involvement in PPNs* research report

One of the key recommendations in the PPN Structural Review Report published in 2022, was to '*minimise the barriers to participation experienced to achieve greater partnership in participation.'* The Department, working with the PPN community, commissioned a research project to explore the diversity of groups involved in PPNs, investigate whether there are under-represented groups and make recommendations on increasing the participation of any such under-represented groups in PPNs. S3 Solutions were commissioned to carry out the research; their final report, along with a reader-friendly version, was published last year and circulated to all PPNs. DRCDG hosted a webinar on the research for PPN stakeholders on 12th November 2025 at which Eamonn Seydak of S3 Solutions presented on the research, its findings and their recommendations and took some questions afterwards. The recording of the webinar can be found here. Several of the questions after the presentation were on next steps, so the floor was opened for a discussion on the area.

A discussion was held during which some members noted that that some PPN stakeholders perceived the research as negative, questioned the methodology of the research and overall felt disappointed by its findings. DRCDG reassured the group that the research was a participatory piece of work, that PPNs were involved with from the very start. Some members expressed their experience of the report as an attack on PPNs. DRCDG confirmed that was not the intention of the report which came about after a recommendation from the Structural Review, with agreement from PPNs and was meant as a strengthening exercise.

It was agreed that recommendation number 2. *"Outreach"* and number 4. "*Participation Budget"* would be taken forward by this group. It was agreed that a pre-budget submission would be drafted by the group, based on these items. It was noted that recommendation 1 "*Case Studies and Guides*" may be addressed via the Roadmap and/or the Annual Report.

Actions:

- NAC members to draft pre-budget submission addressing recommendations 2 and 4 of the research, on Outreach by PPNs and Participation budgets.

7. PPN National Conference 2026

The Chair excused Paul Clabby from Roscommon PPN for this agenda item. The Department received one expression of interest to host the PPN Conference 2026, from Roscommon PPN. This was circulated to the NAC and feedback was requested. Overall the feedback received was positive, including about the hotel and its ability to host a large-scale event.

The group agreed that Roscommon PPN submitted a strong case and they will be the hosts of the 2026 conference. The Chair asked the group to send on their suggestions for potential speakers for the event. All feedback received from the NAC will be shared with Roscommon PPN, including around hotel access and public transport, the suggestion that Roscommon PPN explore the possibility of the hotel putting on a shuttle bus for the event to transport attendees from the main road, and potential speakers for the event.

Membership of the Conference Subgroup was discussed; the sub-group will meet monthly to help organise the event. It was noted that Charles and Maria put themselves forward for this sub-group.

In relation to the 2027 conference, it was agreed that more time will be given to PPNs to submit an expression of interest. It was agreed that DRCDG will ask for expressions of interest for the 2027 conference at the same time that the conference hosts for 2026 are announced.

Actions:

- DRCDG will notify Roscommon PPN that their bid to host the conference in 2026 is approved
- Members are asked to submit suggestions for potential speakers as soon as possible
- Members wishing to take part in the conference subgroup should notify DRCDG by email.
- DRCDG will pass on the NAC's feedback regarding access/transport and suggestions around potential speakers to Roscommon PPN.
- DRCDG will request expressions of interest for the 2027 Conference when the 2026 host is announced.

8. PPN Annual Report 2025

The PPN Annual Report 2024 and associated Snapshot are available, in both English and Irish, on the PPN website, here. DRCDG would like to see a review of the current report with a view to securing recommendations for improvements from NAC members. Questions were raised around whether the report is fulfilling its intended purpose, including whether it could deliver on any Implementation Roadmap recommendations and how effectively the Annual Report communicates the PPN story to readers. It was agreed that a review of the PPN Annual Report by the PPN Annual Report Subgroup with a view to further improving future editions, would be beneficial.

NAC members were encouraged to join Muriel and Liam on the Annual Report Sub-group.

Actions

- Members wishing to join the PPN Annual Report subgroup should notify DRCDG at ppn@drcdg.gov.ie
- The Annual Report Subgroup will review the format of the current Annual Report to assess its effectiveness and consider whether it could be used to fulfil actions in the Roadmap

9. Any Other Business

Review of the salesforce platform

The Salesforce platform is under review this year. PPNs will be contacted by the service provider to share their views on how well the platform currently works for them.

DRCDG Funding

DRCDG notified the group that, as part of good governance, a funding agreement will be put in place with all Local Authorities to cover PPN funding. For 2026 funding, the PPN financial controls document has been revised; the updated document will be circulated along with a circular to all PPNs shortly.

PPN Handbook

A short discussion was held on the need to review the PPN Handbook; it was agreed that as PPNs are independent, the PPN Handbook should be reviewed in the context of providing guidance and support rather than prescribed operational control.

Roscommon Community Resilience Toolkit

It was noted that Roscommon County Council and community partners were nominated for a Local Authority Members Award (LAMA) for their Community Resilience Toolkit.

Local Democratic Task Force

A brief update on the work of the Local Democracy Task Force was provided; the group was established in June 2025 to strengthen local government. The Task Force is currently looking at SPC policy role enhancement and will likely have recommendations in the coming months.

Meeting Ends