

## Stakeholder Consultation on a New Strategy to support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland

Question

### A. The Vision

The vision of the current strategy was to create vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, empowered and self-determining communities that support the social, cultural and economic well-being of all members.

Is this vision still valid? Do you have any suggested changes to the vision?

From the perspective of Kildare Public Participation Network, the vision for the new national strategy must reflect not only inclusion and empowerment, but also the holistic well-being, cultural vibrancy, environmental sustainability, and democratic participation that our communities value deeply.

The existing vision from *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities 2019–2024* has served as a strong foundation, but we propose an updated and expanded vision to align more closely with the current priorities and lived experiences of our members and community groups in County Kildare.

#### Proposed Vision:

***“To create healthy, sustainable, inclusive, and connected communities where everyone is actively involved in decision-making and in harmony with the natural environment—ensuring collective well-being, cultural vitality, economic resilience, and a just transition to a greener future.”***

500 words max

### Question B. Mission - what the strategy aims to achieve

The previous strategy identified six high level ambitions to be attained:

1. A thriving community and voluntary sector
2. A strengthened partnership between Government and the community and voluntary sector
3. Community supports underpinned by societal value and community need
4. Resilient communities empowered to meet emerging challenges
5. Empowered communities informing and shaping responses to their needs
6. A thriving volunteering culture

Taking account of the current environment, challenges and priorities for the C&V sector, do these six high level ambitions still reflect the priority for the sector, do you propose any amendments or additional ambitions be included in the new strategy?

### 500 words max

The six high-level ambitions from the previous strategy are still fundamentally aligned with the needs of the sector. However, Kildare PPN believes the following additional ambitions should be incorporated in the new strategy:

- 1. Add to the existing second ambition:** *A strengthened partnership between Government and the community and voluntary sector along with a **Connected and Inclusive Infrastructure for Community Voice***  
There must be sustained recognition and resourcing of participatory infrastructures such as Public Participation Networks, which enable democratic engagement, particularly among those traditionally excluded from decision-making.
- 2. Additional ambition: A Climate-Ready Community Sector**  
Climate action and resilience should be a core ambition, ensuring that the sector is both supported to adapt and empowered to lead local sustainability initiatives.
- 3. Additional ambition: Recognition of the Role of the Sector in Delivering Social Value**  
Community and voluntary groups are not just service providers but are creators of social capital and cohesion. A new ambition should explicitly value this societal role.

### Question C. Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives which define the scope of the previous strategy were:

- Strengthen and develop participative approaches to the development of public policy and programming underpinned by an autonomous community and voluntary infrastructure
- Support and facilitate communities to participate in community development and local development
- Develop and strengthen processes and mechanisms to secure meaningful consultation, inclusion and participation in local, regional and national decision-making structures, particularly by non-engaging and marginalised communities and their representative organisations
- Develop capacity of organisations supporting communities to participate in community development and local development, with a specific focus on marginalised communities
- Supporting commitments in Our Public Service 2020, develop the strategic and operational capacity of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs), including in coordinating, monitoring and supporting community development and local development
- Strengthen and build understanding and capacity to meet Public Sector Duty obligations in local government and community and voluntary organisations
- Supporting commitments in Our Public Service 2020, continue to develop and strengthen Public Participation Networks as the primary mechanism for communities to engage with local government decision-making

- Strengthen and build understanding and capacity to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan
- Strengthen the Local Economic and Community Plan process, enhancing community participation in the development and implementation of plans and securing more effective collaboration and partnership working nationally, regionally and locally.
- Support, develop and enhance capacity in the local government sector in community development and local development
- Support community development and local development to engage with Climate Change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Which of these strategic objectives do you consider to be most relevant and are there further objectives that should be considered?

The objectives listed remain largely relevant and valid. However, Kildare PPN would highlight the following as most relevant to our network and member groups:

- Develop and strengthen processes and mechanisms to secure meaningful consultation, inclusion and participation, especially of marginalised communities.
- Support and facilitate communities to participate in community and local development, recognising and resourcing the full participation of volunteers and underrepresented groups.
- Continue to develop and strengthen Public Participation Networks as the primary mechanism for community engagement in local government.

In addition, we suggest the following new objectives:

- Support cross-sectoral collaboration between community groups, local authorities and other stakeholders to drive innovative solutions to local challenges.
- Build community resilience in the face of climate change, social fragmentation, and digital exclusion, including mental health and wellbeing supports.
- Promote equity and anti-discrimination practices across all levels of community and voluntary activity, with focused capacity-building for intersectional inclusion (e.g. people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and rural communities).

We also urge that objectives be funded and measurable, with built-in accountability mechanisms for implementation and follow-through.

**500 words max**

#### **QuestionD. Strategic Actions**

The previous strategy included 43 strategic actions/commitments, summarised here:

- Develop processes for meaningful consultation, inclusion and participation of all communities in decisions that affect them
- Develop capacity in community and voluntary organisations to support communities

- Support education and training opportunities for community workers, volunteers in community organisations and voluntary board members
- Ensure local decision-making and participatory structures are fit for purpose (e.g. PPNs, LCDCs)
- Introduce a sustainable funding model for the community and voluntary sector
- Develop capacity at all levels to deliver key policy initiatives including UN SDGs, Climate Action and Public Sector Duty

Considering the current context, challenges and opportunities, what specific strategic actions/commitments do you consider could be included in the new strategy?

To make meaningful progress, the new strategy must include actionable and resourced commitments. Kildare PPN proposes the following strategic actions:

1. Sustain and enhance the role of PPNs, ensuring multi-annual core funding and staffing supports to maintain independence, capacity, and outreach to all sectors of the community.
2. Develop robust mechanisms for feedback and accountability between communities and statutory agencies, to close the loop between consultation and action.
3. Ensure digital inclusion strategies are embedded across all community development programmes, providing funding, training, and infrastructure.
4. Resource grassroots climate action through community-led Just Transition initiatives, supported by local government and tailored to local conditions.
5. Establish a national capacity-building programme for volunteers, trustees, and community leaders, including accessible training on governance, funding, advocacy, and digital tools.
6. Introduce a sustainable and long-term funding model for the sector that recognises inflationary pressures, supports long-term sustainability, and values smaller organisations equally.
7. Support collaboration and shared learning between PPNs, Local Development Companies, and Local Authorities, ensuring community voice informs all levels of LECP and LCDC planning.
8. Embed the Public Sector Duty and SDGs into all levels of community planning, with simplified tools and support for community groups to contribute meaningfully.
9. Ensure that civic dialogue and participation structures are inclusive, accessible, and culturally appropriate, especially for minority and marginalised groups.

The next strategy must move beyond aspirational language and be underpinned by firm commitments to implementation, accountability, and co-production with communities.

**500 words max**

QuestionName of Organisation: **Kildare Public Participation Network**

QuestionCounty: **Kildare**

**The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, together with the Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development, wish to thank you for completing this online stakeholder consultation.**