

INVOLVING COMMUNITIES IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Michael Ewing - Development Officer



**Environmental
Pillar**

Working for a sustainable future

When are Communities involved in the Planning Process?

- Reactive
 - Communities of interest
 - Geographic communities
 - Virtual Communities
- Proactive
 - Geographic communities
 - Communities of interest
 - Virtual Communities

What is a Community?

- The people living in one particular area, or
- People who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group or nationality
- A **community** is a social unit with commonality such as norms, religion, values, customs or identity.
- “Community” may also refer to large group affiliations such as the environmental community, national communities, international communities and virtual communities
- **A community = a group of people that care about the same goal.**
- Latin *communitas* "community", "public spirit“.

Empowering Communities For Proactive Engagement in the Planning Process

- Public Participation Networks- Ireland
 - Local Government Reform Act 2014
 - Community Wellbeing
- Community Empowerment Act 2015 – Scotland
 - Community Councils

Public Participation Networks

- Our democracy is made stronger, by allowing diverse views and interests to be considered as part of the decision making process of local government.
- A Public Participation Network (PPN) is a network that allows local authorities to connect with community groups around the country and vice versa.
- The PPN is the 'go to' for all local authorities who wish to benefit from community and voluntary expertise in their area.
- Community groups register to join the PPN in their local authority area.
- PPNs give citizens, through their groups, a greater say in local government decisions which affect their own communities.

Electoral Colleges

- When community groups join their local PPN they elect to join one of the three Electoral Colleges which are:
- Community & Voluntary - voluntary groups working in our communities, like sports clubs, cultural societies, Meals on Wheels or the Scouts
- Environmental - local organisations formed to protect the environment, like An Taisce or BirdWatch Ireland
- Social Inclusion - groups representing people who are socially excluded and whose voices are not heard in our society, such as people with disabilities, migrants or Travellers

Individual Well- Being

According to a study by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC)

“a person’s well-being relates to their physical, social and mental state.

It requires

that basic needs are met,

that people have a sense of purpose, and


that they feel able to achieve important goals, to participate in society and to live the lives they value and have reason to value”.

Community Well-Being

A society's well-being requires that economic, political, environmental, cultural and social developments all be sustainable.

It also requires a focus on inter-generational justice to ensure the well-being of future generations is promoted.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG ELEMENTS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT IT NOW 



In the background and forefront:
Organized, empowered people

1 NO
POVERTY



2 ZERO
HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



5 GENDER
EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND
CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE
ACTION



14 LIFE
BELOW WATER



15 LIFE
ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS




SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS

Health (physical & mental)

How can all members of our community enjoy the best possible physical and mental health? What about people with special needs, older people, and carers?

Environment & Sustainability

How do we value our natural environment and built heritage? What can be done to conserve, protect and restore these? How can we interact with the environment in a sustainable way, and hand it on to the next generation in a better state?

Work, Economy & Resources

How can our communities thrive economically, with good jobs, and supports for enterprise, business, and for people not in work? What resources do we have and are they used effectively without causing harm to social and environmental sustainability?



Values, Culture & Meaning

What is needed to ensure that everyone feels, and actually is, included and valued, and that our different values and cultures are respected and nurtured? What are the important parts of our culture that we want to hand on to future generations?

Social & Community Development

How can we be an inclusive community where we support each other and ensure no one is left out? What are the important social services and facilities we need to live well from childhood to old age?

Participation, Democracy & Good Governance

What is necessary to ensure that our local authority structures support the wellbeing of our community for this and future generations? What is necessary to ensure that we have a voice in the decisions that affect us, and that all voices are being heard?



<https://www.communitywellbeing.ie/wp/>

Steps involved in Developing a Vision for Community Wellbeing





Community
Empowerment (Scotland)
Act 2015

Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015

- supporting [community councils](#) to represent communities' opinions and needs to public bodies
- funding community-led regeneration through the [Empowering Communities Fund](#)
- funding [participatory budgeting](#) through the £1.5 million Community Choices Fund, giving people more power to make decisions on spending in their local areas
- making it easier for communities to take over land and buildings in public ownership through [asset transfer](#)
- giving communities the ability to request to participate in decisions and processes which are aimed at improving outcomes through [participation requests](#)
- setting out best practise for public bodies to engage with communities via the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#)
- providing guidance on [common good property](#)
- launching the [Local Governance Review](#), a comprehensive review of how local decisions are made and how local democracy is working
- supporting public service providers to work together and with local communities via [community planning](#) to shape and deliver better services
- bringing forward legislation to [empower island communities](#)

What are Community Councils?

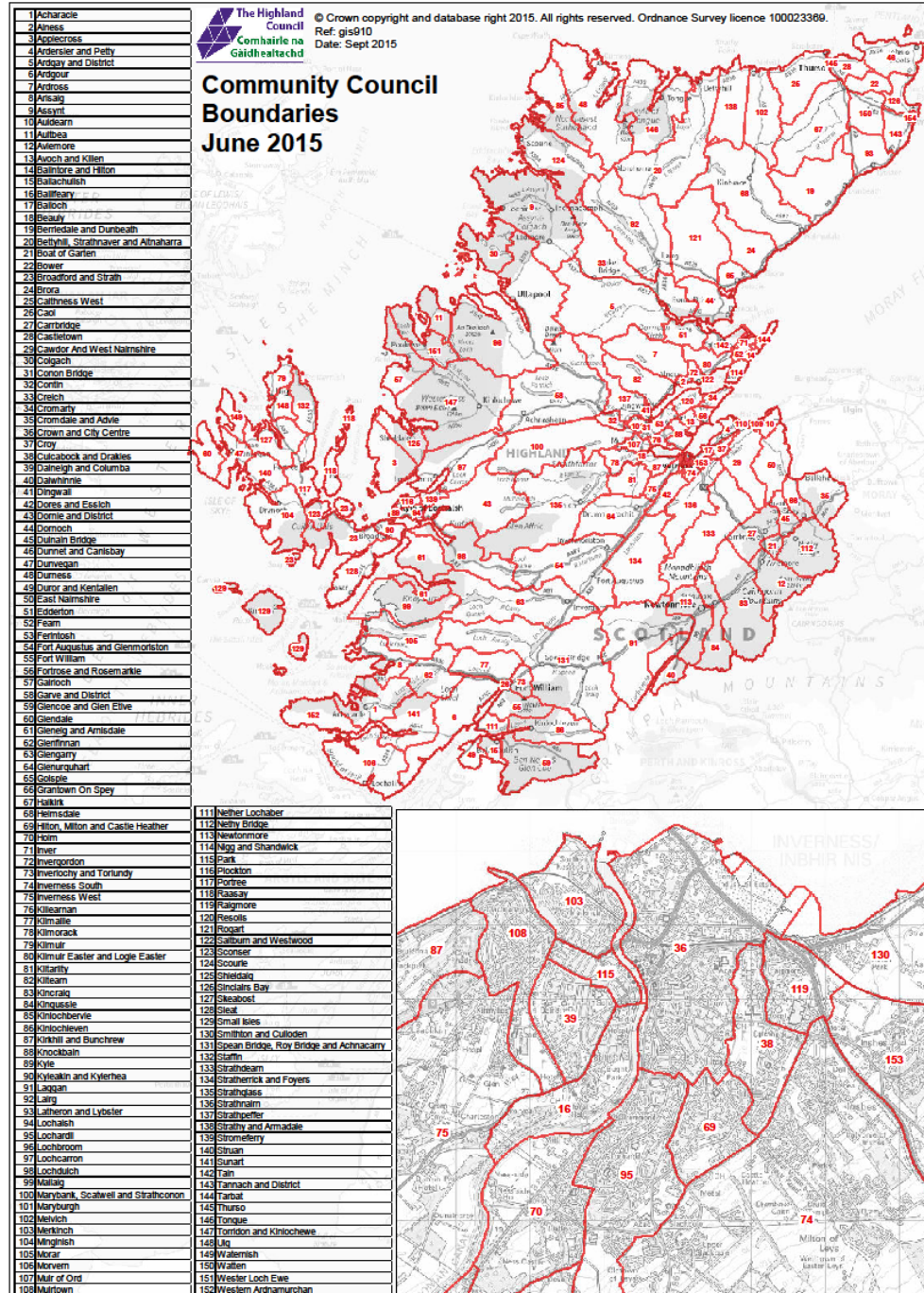
- Community Councils are voluntary bodies which exist within a statutory framework and which have been granted statutory rights of consultation.
- The general purpose of a Community Council is to ascertain, co-ordinate and express the wider views of the entire community within its agreed boundaries.
- They can complement the role of the local authority but are not part of local government.
- Recognised Community Councils, unlike other community organisations, are included in the consultation process for all planning applications. They have the right to receive copies of applications and will be recognised as competent bodies to make representations regarding applications.
- It is the responsibility of a Community Council to satisfy the relevant Council that they have taken positive steps to ascertain the views of the wider community within their area, before making representations on any matter, on behalf of the community.
- All Community Council meetings are open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend their local Community Council

The Potential of Community Councils

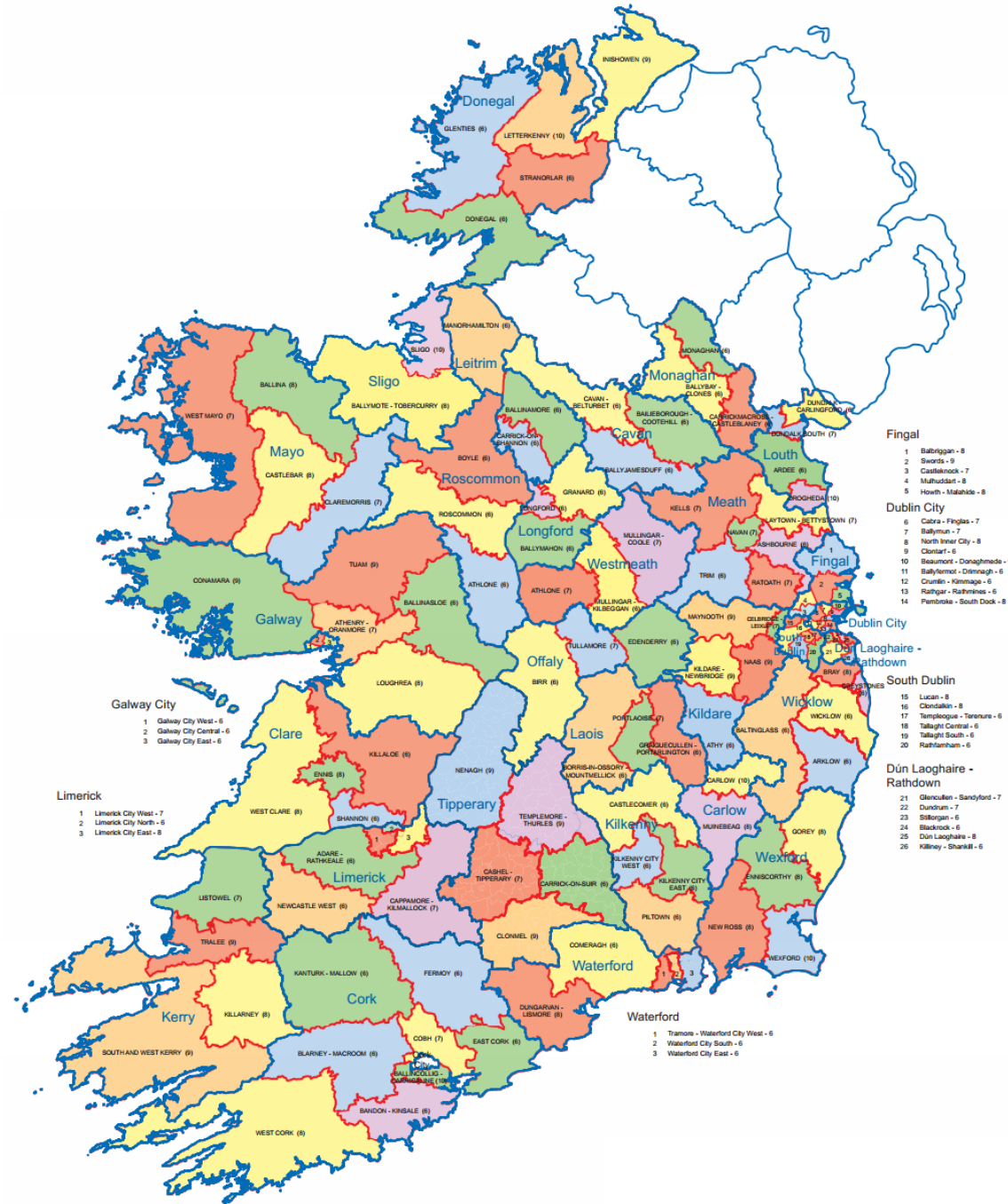


- Act as a bridge between people and public authorities.
- Consist of people who volunteer, unpaid, to help address issues on behalf of their local community.
- Enable people to engage in political decision making and current issues, without having party politics as a basis for contribution.
- Are a way for people with little experience of politics to get involved.
- Work at a local level, open to everyone to attend meetings and take part in public deliberation.
- Have been found internationally to be sometimes more diverse than 'higher-tier' democratic institutions.
- Have, in some places, been leading the way using new 'empowering' legislation and democratic innovations

Community Council Boundaries



Municipal Districts Ireland



Comparative Population Sizes Community Councils vs PPNs

- Highlands Council 1,500 per Community Council
- Aberdeen City 8,000 per Community Council

- Co Roscommon PPN Average per Municipal District 21,500
- Co Cork PPN Average per Municipal District 67,000
- Dublin City PPN 544,000

Are There Existing Structures and Processes to Enable Communities to Proactively Engage with the Planning System?

- Probably not, but the review of the Community Councils published in April 2019 should provide much food for thought.
- <https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/strengthening-community-councils>
- And the review of the PPNs to commence in January 2020 will provide the opportunity for opening up the discussion to enable really resourced and empowered community engagement in the planning process at a real community level.
- There is so much to be gained by doing this. Including increased social cohesion and informed and empowered engagement with the political and planning processes

Thank you
Go raibh maith agaibh

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