



Public Participation Network Feedback Form –PPN Disability Network / Disability Federation of Ireland Meeting

Public Participation Network Development Officer: **Siobhan Cronogue**

Date: 18.07.17

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions.
2. Discussion on how DFI can support PPN Disability Rep's/Groups
3. Issues
4. Meeting with Paddy Mahon, Chief Executive, Longford County Council
5. A.O.B

Present: Fergus Reynolds (Longford Challenging Access), Maria Keelty (NCBI), Stephan Garland (MS Society) Agnes Agnew (Active Retirement Chairperson), Ita Donlon (Active Retirement Secretary), Jo Banning (Alzheimer Society – Longford Branch), Mary Henry (Arthritis Ireland – Longford Branch), Karen McGonigle (Midlands Dyspraxia DCD), Michael Bryson (Midlands West and Border Autism Support), Martin Tarmey (Irish Wheelchair Society)

In Attendance: PJ Cleery (DFI), Aoife Delaney (DFI), Siobhán Cronogue (PPN)

Presentations: Yes / No

Siobhán Cronogue, PPN Development Officer opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for their attendance. She asked everyone at the table to introduce themselves and state the group/organisation they represented. Please see above “*Present*” for list of attendees and groups represented.

Siobhán welcomed the visiting guest's PJ Cleery and Aoife Delaney, Disability Federation of Ireland to Longford.

PJ Cleery (DFI) said how delighted he and his colleague Aoife Delaney were to meet with everyone. He said he was impressed with the work that had been carried out already by Disability Reps especially a walk about report 2015 which was produced by NCBI and Maria Keelty on access issues in the town. He explained that DFI work with many local authorities, organisations and agencies around the country. PJ informed the meeting that some years back DFI changed what they say and what they do so that people with disabilities were equal and they became very focussed on the end goal and what actually happens to change the lives of people living with a disability. He acknowledged that the establishment of PPN's through the Local Government Reform Act 2014 was a great resource and said it was so important that disability reps were at the table when local decisions were being made especially around funding. He went on to explain DFI's community development team. He said since Siobhan Cronogue had contacted him in March 2017 to see how DFI could support the work of the PPN Disability Network that DFI had since employed a development worker for the midlands. He hoped that Aoife Delaney their new recruit would be based in Longford for two days a week pending a proposal to Longford County Council. PJ then handed over to Aoife.

Aoife said how excited she was to be joining such an active, effective PPN disability network and gave a back ground of her experience to date. She said she was eager to hear what PPN Disability Groups wanted from her work plan and listed out some of the services DFI can provide:

- Disability Awareness Training for Longford County Council Staff
- Self-Advocacy Training
- National Networking of Access groups
- Information sharing in other counties with groups experiencing similar issues. (best practices)
- Train the Trainer for Disability Reps/members

She ended by saying the key was sustainability. She then asked to hear from the disability reps present.

Fergus Reynolds (Longford Challenging Access) said he felt he was five years advocating with very little being done. He highlighted that €30m was spent on rebuilding the Cathedral with no consultation with older persons or people with disabilities even though this was the group who used the Cathedral the most.

Maria Keelty (NCBI) noted that the lift in the Cathedral was not working even though the disability toilet was upstairs. She also spoke about various issues around the town that needed to be addressed such as audio boxes not working, bubble pavement starting to drop, issues with interlocking pavement which had already resulted in two serious falls leaving one elderly lady with 3 fractures. She said she was delighted to see the Longford County Council had begun work on raised manholes around the town.

Stephen Garland (MS Longford) raised the issue of kerbs not meeting with regulation height standards of 30mm. He gave the example of near the entrance of St. Mel's College. He went on to say that he advocated to get this rectified as he uses a disability scooter and was shocked to find out that work was carried out on one side of the crossing but not on the other. He asked that there be more joined up thinking when work crews are carrying out this kind of work. He was told by workmen fixing one side that the other side was a different crew so he would need to ring the council

which he did. He also raised the issue of not being able to cross the street from outside his own home. To cross safely he has to extend his journey even though it makes sense for a crossing to be there. He also noted that due to the outside gullies on Dublin Street he did not know how blind people or the visually impaired coped with manoeuvring through this street.

Meeting attendees went on to discuss their frustration at money being spent at local level on various arts sculptures and events when a small portion of these funds would make such a difference addressing these access issues. PJ Cleery responded by explaining that monies are allotted by the Department and must be spent in that particular sector. He said now the elected members have decision making authority where as previously it was the County Manager. He said the PPN was a great resource for disability reps to influence decisions and change policy. He highlighted that Ireland signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and it will be ratified soon. Once ratified Local Authorities will have more responsibility in the area of disability.

Siobhan Cronogue, PPN Development Officer said that the Chief Executive was very supportive of the PPN Disability Network and was meeting with nominated Disability Reps Maria Keely and Fergus Reynolds next week along with other senior members of staff (John Brannigan, Head of Services Housing, Infrastructure, Environment and Emergency Services and Frank Horne, Access Officer). She also said that he planned to stop by before this meeting concluded.

PJ again reiterated the asset of the PPN whereby community groups could participate and raise issues through the Strategic Policy Committees and Local Community Development Committee. He also noted it would be a good idea to ask for a role description of the councils access officer as this role can vary from Local Authority to Local Authority.

The group agreed that the meeting was concluded and Siobhan went to invite Paddy Mahon to meet with all. Siobhan introduced the Chief Executive and each member present introduced themselves and the group they represented. Paddy said Longford County Council was fully on board with supporting the PPN Disability Network and working together on all issues raised. He told the attendees that they were in the process of employing an architect who would be ensuring that Disability Groups going forward would be consulted through the PPN prior to work commences. PJ Cleary (FDI) gave him a brief rundown of the work DFI undertook and Paddy asked that Siobhan follow up with DFI to deliver Disability Awareness Training to all Longford County Council staff.

The meeting ended with all agreeing that Aoife Delaney would contact Siobhan Cronogue for an update on next week's meeting. Siobhan would circulate a date for the next PPN Disability Network Meeting in September. All agreed to share contact details for correspondence.