



Fingal
Public
Participation
Network

Sub PPN Steering Committee

Final Report

Prepared on 20th October 2021

Approved by Fingal PPN Secretariat on 26th October 2021

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History and Background

At the Annual General Plenary Meeting of Fingal PPN on 8th May 2019, the Plenary approved the following motion:

Lusk AC proposes the establishment of village and town based PPN groups in Fingal to promote community cohesion and encourage close collaboration between local groups and organisations. These local or micro PPNs will provide the supports necessary to encourage the free-flow of information between established community groups and also facilitate the establishment of new groups. By providing an information hub and embedding PPN best practices, local events can be organised more effectively and in a way that ensure that they are open to participation by all members of the community.

Motion on behalf of Lusk Athletics Club (PPN Number: PPN-00654)

The PPN Plenary meeting on 6th November 2019 provided an update on this motion:

The National Guidelines for PPNs provides for the establishment of 'sub PPNs' in defined geographical areas in counties that do not have Municipal Districts. This provision has not been activated in Fingal PPN to date.

The setting up of area based PPNs would have to be approached sensitively to ensure that existing area organisations such as community councils, community associations etc. are not encroached or threatened by the setup of a local area PPN. If Fingal PPN were to proceed with the establishment of a local area PPN, the local area based PPN should:

- Operate as per the PPN User Guide and Fingal PPN Constitution*
- Have reporting structures to the Secretariat and Plenary*
- Not undermine the existing roles of PPN Linkage Groups, the Plenary or Secretariat*

Recommended Action: *Propose a pilot of a local area based PPN in the Lusk Area to take place in 2020 in partnership with existing (and potentially new) PPN members in the Lusk Area.*

Due to a change in staff resources which impacted continuity and the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic in early 2020, this item was not examined until August 2020 when a new resource worker was recruited and placed in the role.

In September 2020, Lusk Community Network (the group formed as a result of the initial proposed motion in May 2019) made a presentation to Fingal PPN Secretariat on their proposed plans for a local area based PPN in Lusk. At this meeting, the Secretariat proposed and agreed to form a subgroup to examine the proposal of the establishment of the Local Area PPN.

Establishment of Steering Committee

A six-person steering committee was formed in March 2021 which consisted of four Secretariat members, one Fingal PPN Resource Worker and one Fingal County Council Senior Community Officer (support capacity).

The steering committee was facilitated by the PPN Resource Worker (Laura Barton – Acting Resource Worker and later Natasha Bagnall – Resource Worker) who had no vote on any decisions. The Fingal County Council Senior Community Officer stepped away from the Steering Committee once the Steering Committee finalised their Terms of Reference.

Work of Steering Committee

The Steering Committee undertook to explore the feasibility of establishing a local area/geographic PPN structure under Fingal PPN. In order to do this effectively, the following work was completed by the Steering Committee:

A comprehensive review of the history of the motion up to and including the issues raised by the Secretariat members at the 27th October meeting with Lusk Community Network was completed in order to inform all steering committee members of the context of this issue.

The Steering Committee considered how the establishment of a local area PPN in Lusk would not undermine the current structure of Fingal PPN (Linkage Groups, Plenary and Secretariat). The steering committee found that the current complex structure of Fingal PPN already creates a considerable demand on the human resources of Fingal PPN in order to fulfil the operational capacity of delivering the work plan as set out in the Strategic Plan. It has become clear after a Strategic Plan review earlier in 2021, that Fingal PPN need to make more progress to achieve the actions originally set out in 2018. Currently there are approximately 25 linkage group meetings scheduled to take place each calendar year. This is a core function of Fingal PPN which must be

delivered on and requires the dedicated support of a full time Support Worker. Furthermore, Fingal PPN Secretariat meet 10 times each year with additional subgroup work placing further demands on Fingal PPN Secretariat and the supporting staff. The Steering Committee found that adding a Sub PPN into the current structure would place additional demands on Fingal PPN while not delivering on the workplan as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

It was also highlighted that Lusk Community Network lack experience with the existing structures of Fingal PPN via the Secretariat, Linkage Group attendance or undertake representative roles within these groups. Therefore, it would not be possible to replicate these complex PPN structures at a local level without this experience and expertise. Setting up these structures at a local level duplicates and dilutes the ability to impact on decision making structures by adding an additional layer to the process.

The Steering Committee considered the scalability of a Local Area PPN across Fingal County and the subsequent pressure this would have on PPN resources. The current staff resource is stretched to capacity to deliver the current work plan as set out in the Strategy Plan by the Secretariat. It is not possible to initially establish and then scale this project without placing significant pressure on the operational capacity of Fingal PPN, in particular, the current linkage group structures which are operating at a high level of capacity delivering outputs and motions from almost every linkage group meeting. Actions within the Strategic Plan will be severely impacted by increasing the scale of this project across the county. Fingal PPN Secretariat are dedicated to ensuring open access and participation for all members. By being unable to provide this for other Fingal PPN members in the future is counter to the values of Fingal PPN.

While considering a Local Area PPN structure with the framework governing Fingal PPN i.e. Public Participation Networks Handbook (published in Nov 2020) and Fingal PPN Constitution (published in Nov 2018), the geographical limits as defined by the Handbook encourage action at an electoral level in the event where there is no municipal district structure. 'In cities where there is no Municipal District structure, they may wish to establish sub PPNs in set geographical areas, perhaps based on electoral areas (PPN Handbook, P.27). In Fingal, Fingal PPN determine that these three geographical areas are aligned with the current Fingal County Council Area Committee Structures which are defined as 1. Ongar – Castleknock – Blanchardstown – Mulhuddart; 2. Swords – Howth – Malahide and 3. Balbriggan – Lusk – Rush.

Therefore, if Fingal PPN are to proceed with the establishment of local area PPNs, they should reflect these defined three areas. Lusk need to combine with other areas within the Area Committee boundaries in order to develop an effective Sub PPN.

Timeline of Actions

- **30th March** – FPPN Secretariat ratified the Local Area PPN Steering Committee Terms of Reference
- **September** – Steering Committee met to examine TORS and progress on any outstanding actions.
- **End of September** – Linkage groups members as well as the wider PPN membership were invited to an information session on Sub PPNs where members could seek clarification and give feedback.
- **October** – Written Submission accepted from the wider PPN membership on the proposal of Sub PPNs.
- **19th October** – Steering Committee met to review feedback received from PPN members with a report to be compiled for Fingal PPN Secretariat.
- **26th October** – Report presented to Fingal PPN Secretariat for feedback and/or approval.
- **10th November** – Update on the motion to be presented at the Fingal PPN Plenary meeting.

Feedback gathered from PPN Members

The Steering Committee returned to the wider PPN membership to seek their input and feedback in relation to the establishment of Sub PPNs in Fingal. Members were very engaged with the information at the session held on 23rd September 2021. They were invited to input via written submission before 5th October 2021. This table below demonstrates the written submissions and feedback from the information evening. The feedback is structured on common themes and includes recommendations made by PPN members. The feedback and coinciding recommendations are not necessarily from the same source but, where feasible, thematically grouped. Feedback and recommendations can be read independently if preferred. Fingal PPN would like to thank the wider membership for engaging in this process to support the Steering Committee with this work.

	Feedback	Recommendations
1	The FPPN is a complicated structure & adding an additional structure (Sub PPN) would make it more complicated	Should concentrate on developing our PPN and engage more groups before adding a new structure
2	There is no legislative or government guidelines for a local area PPN This structure is not possible.	
3	Lusk's population is too small to establish a Sub PPN and is not an electoral area	
4	A local PPN would encourage exchange of information locally	The FPPN should support and encourage cohesion, collaboration & information sharing between all community groups
5	Legislation and the Handbook refer to Sub PPNs based on electoral areas not Local Area PPNs.	Use the terminology outlined in the Handbook and reference Sub PPNs.
6	Not all community groups fit into set geographical or electoral areas	Encourage communities to extend boundaries & share information particularly sharing successes and best practice
7	The concept currently resembles an independent community council of association	This association/council should link into the FPPN in the same way other organisations do
8	Many groups are active and involved beyond the remit of the local authority	Develop & empower our linkage groups to represent the community & influence policy decisions at Fingal & National level
9	Will Fingal fund a sub PPN?	
10	Localised Sub PPNs may prevent groups in Lusk engaging with the FPPN	
11	A Sub PPN in Lusk can approach local groups not registered with the FPPN	The FPPN need to examine why groups are not registering with the PPN
12	There is a lack of clarity regarding the purpose of a sub PPN	See handbook 2021 definition
13	Difficult concept for members to understand	

14	There are no Sub PPNs anywhere in Ireland	Need to model a sub PPN on an existing similar structure
15	Not convinced of the need or the top-down approach to a sub PPN	
16	Aim of the information meeting was not clear to participants	
17		FPPN should be encourage communities to establish groups which represent stakeholders in their area who in turn engage with the FPPN
18	No mention of a Sub PPN in the MOU, Strategic Plan, Constitution or Work Plan	
19	The Terms of Reference (TOR) were unsatisfactory	
20		Feasible to create a group with a flat structure (similar to FPPN) which can register with the FPPN and represent the community in Lusk

Learning for Fingal PPN going forward

This Steering Committee, through working on this issue, would like to highlight that all decisions that are made at Plenary meetings, Linkage Group meetings and Secretariat meetings should align with Fingal PPN's Strategic Plan. Going forward, some checks and balances should be put in place to ensure that when motions are proposed at Plenary meetings, that the necessary research and background information is present before a vote can take place. It most also be acknowledged that Fingal PPN has operated virtually for the last 18 months as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Coupled with the resource challenges faced by Fingal PPN, this has impacted on the length of time that it has taken to deliver an appropriate outcome for all involved. Fingal PPN will endeavour to resolve or deliver actions in a more timely manner going forward. Through this process, Fingal PPN recognise the great value of the resource of the PPN membership. The inputs received from the members demonstrates their in-depth knowledge of the current structures of Fingal PPN as well as where we can consolidate and strengthen the network for the benefit of all members into the future.

Subgroup Recommendations as approved by Fingal PPN

Fingal PPN's Strategic Plan is ambitious and utilises the current staff resources to their maximum capacity. It is of utmost importance that Fingal PPN can deliver on their Strategic Plan and a concerted effort is being made to deliver these core actions before the end of 2022.

When examining the proposal of establishing a Sub PPN, it was found to not be scalable due to the lack of resources and is ultimately not equitable in terms of allowing resources for a project that does not strengthen Fingal PPN and their wider membership. In fact, the establishment of a Sub PPN dilutes the current decision-making process and add additional layers to an already complex PPN structure when Fingal PPN Secretariat are dedicated to making the network more open and accessible to everyone in Fingal.

After seeking feedback from the wider PPN membership, the consensus supports a deepening understanding of the current structures and engagement of members without adding further to the already complex structure of Fingal PPN.

After consulting the PPN Handbook, the geographic nature of this proposal does not align with the guidance that was issued in November 2020. If this issue is to be examined in the future, then it should align with the current Fingal County Council Area Committee Structures which are defined as 1. Ongar – Castleknock – Blanchardstown – Mulhuddart; 2. Swords – Howth – Malahide and 3. Balbriggan – Lusk – Rush.

The Steering Committee recommends that Fingal PPN consolidate the current structures to help create a better understanding of the work of Fingal PPN will ultimately make the PPN more effective. Fingal PPN are encouraged to see the enthusiasm of replicating the 'flat structure' of the PPN in Lusk and wholly support and promote active representation at a local level. However, this should be within the current structures of Fingal PPN.

Fingal PPN welcome the further involvement and engagement of Lusk Community Network into the current linkage group structure, to put themselves forward as reps and indeed to run for vacant Secretariat seats as and when they become available. This deepened engagement will support their work at a local level and embed them further into the structures of Fingal PPN.

Fingal PPN welcomes support from the Department of Rural and Community Development to implement the bottom up suggestions of PPN members. The issue of creating sub PPNs may be

examined again in the future with further guidance from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Steering Committee Members:

John Melvin

Angela Rogers

Hanumantha Rao

Yetunde Joyce

Natasha Bagnall (Resource Worker)