



Dear Stakeholder,

I am delighted to let you know that the Report on the PPN Structural Review has now been published and is available on the Department of Rural and Community Development's website here <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/19e5e-ppn-structural-review-report/>. Publication of the report fulfils the commitment in the Programme for Government to *'Carry out a comprehensive review of PPNs to ensure that they are fit for purpose for climate action and community development.'*

I would like to thank you all for taking the time to participate in and contribute to the review. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Oversight Committee for their very valuable contribution – I am aware that you provided observations and inputted on review as it proceeded and your work is very much appreciated.

The report sets out the findings of the “root and branch” review of PPN structures that was conducted by an independent contractor, Mazars, in 2021. As you will be aware, the purpose of the review was to:

- assess the operation of the network to date against the overall objectives as outlined in the 2014 Report;
- identify opportunities for further strengthening and enhancing PPNs;
- make recommendations as to how to build on existing strengths and support the future development of PPNs; and
- focus on highlighting examples of best practice already in operation and provide recommendations on how these could be replicated across the network where appropriate.

Mazars used a highly consultative process to conduct the review, in keeping with the participative ethos of the PPNs, and I am delighted that over 650 individuals inputted into the process. The level of input speaks to the passion and energy of all those involved in the PPNs, who often go above and beyond in working on behalf of their communities across Ireland.

Strengths of PPN structure identified in the review included that it gives communities access to decision makers that would not otherwise be possible; provides a voice for communities in local decision-making; creates strong relationships between stakeholders and that it delivers ongoing communication, engagement and information-sharing.



However, the review also found a lack of visibility, understanding and awareness of PPNs; confusion around roles; difficulties in recruitment and retention of a diverse range of members and representatives; and challenges arising from differences in staff skills/employment conditions and staff turnover.

The report puts forward recommendations aimed at improving PPN structures and addressing some of the current challenges. Mazars has also recommended the introduction of a national PPN coordination structure to address several findings, with three options around models for such a national structure with varying levels of oversight. This structure would also enhance engagement with local development and representation structures, including the local development companies, the Older People's Councils and Comhairle na nÓg.

This potential for youth engagement is something I am particularly happy to see, as encouraging youth participation in the policy sphere is a priority for this government. Youth participation will also form an important element in an upcoming research project on barriers to participation in PPNs, which my Department aims to commence before the end of this year.

The Department of Rural and Community Development is eager to hear your views on the report. To this end, we aim to hold a webinar on the Report in September to allow discussion on its findings and help begin the process of prioritising its recommendations.

A poll will be circulated separately to identify a date for the webinar in September.

In advance of the webinar, we would be most grateful if you would share your feedback on the report. We would welcome written feedback from PPNs on the recommendations made in Mazars report, any gaps which the PPNs feel the report does not address, and any other issues of concern which the PPNs would like to raise. We therefore ask PPNs to consider the content of the report over the summer and return your feedback by email to the Department at [PPN@DRCD.gov.ie](mailto:PPN@DRCD.gov.ie), by the end of August. Your written feedback will be used to structure the webinar, so that the discussion can be directed to issues which PPNs feel are most significant.

We want to work with you to prioritise recommendations and to develop an implementation roadmap to guide any changes that may be made to how PPNs are structured. These will not be limited to the recommendations made by Mazars in the structural review report, but will also be open to further ideas and recommendations prompted by the report and by stakeholders' experiences.



We plan to set up a working group to oversee the priorities and actions agreed. The working group will be representative of key stakeholder groups and will be tasked with developing a roadmap to guide the development of the national PPN network over the coming years.

I look forward to hearing your views on the report and on ways forward in September.

In the meantime, I wish you a pleasant summer.

Yours sincerely,

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Mr. Joe O'Brien T.D.,  
Minister of State for Community Development and Charities