



SUBMISSION ON SOCIAL INCLUSION TO THE PRE- DRAFT OF CLARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022- 2028

Clare Public Participation Network Social Inclusion
College

Abstract

Submission on issues of social inclusion for consideration in advance of the drafting of Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028

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Social Inclusion submission from Clare Public Participation Network (PPN)

in respect of the Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028 Pre-Draft Consultation

Information on Clare PPN:

Clare PPN is a network of 289 community & voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups from Clare. Clare PPN has three 'Colleges' which gather the member groups in terms of their interests and activities – these are environmental college, social inclusion college and community and voluntary college. Clare PPN exists to facilitate the formal participation by the community sector in Clare County Council's decision making structures and to serve as a support and information sharing network for the Community and Voluntary Sector in Clare. It is funded jointly by the Department of Rural and Community Development and Clare County Council but is autonomous and its activities are directed by its members through an elected secretariat.

Clare PPN Social Inclusion College welcomes the opportunity to make the following submission in relation to the County Development Plan:

This submission is informed by the following policy documents:

[Clare County Council Strategic Issues Paper](#)

[Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region](#)

[National Planning Framework Project Ireland 2040](#)

[National Development Plan 2018-2027](#)

[Clare County Council LECP 2016-2021](#)

[Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities](#)

[National Traveller and Roma Strategy](#)

[Catherine Day Report on Ending Direct Provision](#)

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1. Impact of the County Development Plan on Social Inclusion in County Clare

As the document that sets the overall strategy for planning and development in the county for a six- year period, the Clare County Development Plan is an opportunity to tackle social exclusion through planning that delivers better integration & greater accessibility to housing, education, health and transport at all stages of life. Clare PPN Social Inclusion College calls on Clare County Council to make an express commitment in its County Development Plan to working strategically to reduce poverty and marginalisation within the County. Clare PPN notes that all ten of the National Planning Framework’s Strategic Outcomes as described in the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) have potentially positive impacts on marginalised and disadvantaged communities but most especially:

- **Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities** are a strong part of the identity of the Southern Region. Rural areas play a key role in the Region’s economy, environment and quality of life, which is reflected by the objectives of the Action Plan for Rural Development.
- **Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services** is key to meeting the demands of an increased population, starting with early childhood care and education, investment in schools and third level institutional infrastructure. Education is central to our ambition as a nation and requires careful planning and coordination across national, regional and local public bodies.

The RSES also lists eleven strategy statements of which three have a direct impact on social inclusion:



2. Vision Statement

Clare PPN proposes that Clare County Council adopt the following Vision Statement for the county:

‘A County that values, protects and restores its unique landscape, environment and biodiversity, where sustainable livelihoods are prioritised for this and future generations and where citizens, migrants, ethnic minorities and people of all abilities and age-groups and genders are able to reach their potential in an atmosphere of support, respect and inclusion, where Local Government is open, transparent and accountable and committed to reducing poverty and marginalisation. Our vision is for a county to be part of and a county to be proud of.’

3. Population & Housing

Clare PPN Social Inclusion College want Clare County Council to embark on an ambitious programme of constructing directly built Local Authority Housing, of a variety of types and sizes, sufficient to meet the current and future demands of those on the Local Authority Housing List.

We further suggest that there is a necessity in Ennis, Shannon, Kilrush and Kilaloe at a minimum, for the construction or purchase of a supply of housing for supported ‘step down’ purposes. These purposes would include to provide secure time-limited homes for set periods (e.g 6 months) for those suffering from addiction, those released from prison into homelessness, those moving out of domestic violence refuges and the long term homeless. The provision and staffing with support and social workers of such step down housing units would allow people to be supported into their own long term accommodation and would reduce the numbers of people presenting for emergency accommodation. Clare County Council could if necessary work with an approved housing body to establish such sheltered accommodation settings – which should be separate units of housing or small single purpose clusters

Clare PPN Social Inclusion College also recommend that Clare County Council take a proactive and ambitious approach to the purchase and renovation of town and village centre premises with a view to providing cost rental or local authority housing in these town centres.



A. Traveller Community:

Living conditions and environmental health: 12% of Travellers in Clare are homeless; those living in trailers identify lack of access to basic facilities, including lack of access to running water (71.5%) and flush toilets (71.5%).

Noting the exclusion and disproportionate levels of deprivation experienced by the Traveller Community in Clare, Clare PPN Social Inclusion College are calling on Clare County Council to work in consultation with them to address the specific needs of Travellers and ensure that adequate good quality targeted housing/accommodation provision is achieved in line with those needs:

- eg. Traveller families in Clare are on average comprised of 4.5 people, while the settled community national average family size is 2.8 people. Such numbers are currently not reflected in existing or planned social housing. There is a need for supply of four and five bedroom houses in Local Authority and Approved Housing Bodies' Developments.
- At the last census 64% of the Traveller Community in County Clare were under 25 years of age. This indicates that need for accommodation for the Traveller community will increase due to likely family formation or increases in existing family sizes of young couples.
- A process for a human rights based consultation with the Traveller community in Clare needs to be established immediately. This consultation should feed into the draft county development plan. The current Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 -2024 failed to secure the participation of the Traveller Community and it also should be reviewed following a proper consultation process. Clare PPN is concerned that it underestimates the need for local authority housing and Traveller specific accommodation in the County and in so doing is likely to ensure that the current housing insecurity for the Traveller community will continue with the resultant detrimental affects on the lives of young people, children and the general Traveller community. Clare PPN recommend a specific consultation process with the community in Clare before the drafting of the County Development Plan 2022-2028. This consultation should aim to correctly establish need and future need, accommodation type required, supports for those exiting homelessness, services required in existing homes including for disabled Travellers, and the supports and amenities needed so that the members of the Traveller community have access to secure, comfortable homes which suit their diverse cultural, social and health needs.

B. Clare County Council should through its planning, direct builds and purchases of property facilitate independent living, universal access and proximity to services and community for older people. An ageing population is likely to experience disability or reduced mobility and so universal access planning will ensure that our housing stock is fit for purpose- that is providing comfortable homes for our communities at all stages of life.

- C. Clare County Council should through its planning, direct building, funding streams and other supports ensure that older people can live with dignity and independence in their own homes and communities as long as possible where desired, with adaptation grant processes that are streamlined and uncomplicated.
- D. Clare County Council should provide opportunities for older people to downsize to suitable comfortable long term accommodation if they wish to do so and should seek to provide this within the local community.
- E. Clare County Council should ensure that homes for disabled people of working age are located or allocated so that they can be near employment opportunities, social outlets, accessible dependable public transport and educational campuses.
- F. Clare PPN would like to see CDP 2022- 2028 detail plans to redevelop/repurpose town centre housing which so that it is attractive to many cohorts including older people and lone parents, giving access to schools, shops, churches and social opportunities without the need for car ownership. This would in turn reduce carbon footprint, reduce urban sprawl and revitalise town centres. Vacant and/or derelict buildings must either be brought back into use or have rates/taxes imposed.
- G. Provide a more varied range of social housing options including homes suitable for single men and women. Investigate the possibilities of enabling through planning and through direct building shared secure living circumstances in town centres such as developments suited for older people, safe gender specific developments, supported independent homes for people with disabilities.
- H. Ensure children's play areas within residential developments and additional recreational facilities including community gardens within walking distance.
- I. Facilitate the retro-fitting of housing with green-energy infrastructure such as solar panels and natural insulation through an accessible and affordable grants system. Current schemes are unaffordable for those without independent means or savings. Clare County Council should take immediate steps in its planning, building and collaborations to ensure that all constructed dwellings are as far as is possible carbon neutral.
- J. All housing bought or constructed should have a large sized downstairs bathroom with an accessible shower and access suitable those with disabilities.
- K. Allow for choice in social housing location, type, tenure and accommodation in responding to need, to ensure continuity of familial and community support to disadvantaged families
- L. Allow for social housing relocation in response to changes in family circumstances (additional members, fewer members, change in health/mobility, employment opportunity)
- M. Plan for diverse neighbourhoods with a balance of public, affordable, cost rental, specific purpose and private housing which will create the healthiest and most-integrated communities and prevent 'ghettoisation'.
- N. Include in housing needs projections the likelihood that Local Authorities will be given a significant role in providing housing within the community for international protection applicants- see note below:

IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING DIRECT PROVISION IN COUNTY CLARE

Currently there are more than 400 international protection applicants in Clare in Direct Provision Centres. It is in the interests of their human rights as well as to the benefit of the whole community and its resilience and cohesion that these methods of accommodating migrants are changed and people are not placed in institutional settings where they are excluded from proper integration with the community and the community does not have the benefits of their skills and capacity. Clare PPN notes firstly that the current programme for government includes a commitment to end the practice of Direct Provision accommodation within the life time of this government for international protection applicants and secondly that the recently published Government commissioned ‘Advisory Group Report on Ending Direct Provision’ recommends **a transfer of responsibility for accommodating International Protection Applicants to Local Authorities by 2023**. Based on the projections contained in the Catherine Day Report which is linked at page one each local authority should expect that if this report is implemented that they will be in the position of providing housing through HAP or similar for approximately 135 individuals or families making up that number per year. Attention should be paid to ensuring that IPO applicants located in our communities are placed in locations where they may access employment, social outlets and public transport to ensure that they are positioned to benefit from and contribute to our society.

4. Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Retail Development



- A. Clare PPN Social Inclusion College calls on Clare County Council to ensure that plans to develop the economy, or economic activity in the county are aimed at improving the wellbeing and opportunity for everyone in the county. Clare PPN note that not all economic activity is beneficial and that concentrating on economic returns without concentrating on the distribution of those returns will ensure that poverty and marginalisation continue. In particular all tourism or resource projects and initiatives supported by Clare County Council should be evaluated for their ability to impact positively on the lives, livelihoods and wellbeing of those in the host communities.
- B. Clare PPN Social Inclusion College calls on Clare County Council to collaborate with Third Level institutions, further education providers and, if necessary public transport providers to ensure widespread access to education, training and apprenticeships in growth or green industries. This will help to lessen the reliance on seasonal work which can lock communities into seasonal unemployment and low income.

- C. Clare PPN Social Inclusion College calls on Clare County Council to include in its CDP 2022-2028 strategic goals and targets around the provision of these opportunities for apprenticeships, up-skilling or re-skilling in renewable energy and research & development to help ensure a just transition and make sure no worker or community is left behind.
- D. Clare PPN Social Inclusion College recommends that Clare County Council should liaise with state funded educators to provide childcare for the children of adult students to ensure that those suffering financial hardship are not excluded from education opportunities. Strategic planning of and investment in the provision of childcare, education and training are central in targeting marginalisation and poverty.
- E. Clare PPN Social Inclusion College recommends that Clare County Council make a commitment in its CDP 2022-2028 that projects supported, funded or run by Clare County Council will pay a minimum of the Living Wage (currently €12.30 p/h).
- F. Clare PPN requests that Clare County Council will ensure that any proposed business development which requires approval has long-term benefits and aims to reduce poverty in the surrounding community by including marginalised residents at consultation and employment stages.
- G. Ensure that all developments (business, industrial, retail or residential) are linked to accessible, reliable and affordable public transport.
- H. Clare PPN Social Inclusion College recommends that Clare County Council itself begins a recruitment initiative for roles in CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL for people with disabilities as a pilot project to raise the profile of disabled people as an educated, skilled and capable pool of talent for employers in County Clare.
- I. Clare PPN calls on Clare County Council to collaborate with public transport bodies to ensure access to employment for disabled people of working age. Our Environmental College submission recommends a task force on rural and inter urban public transport in Clare should be set up and we echo that call here.

5. Towns & Villages



- A.** We call on Clare County Council to seek funding and make commitments to lead the way in installing ‘Changing Places’ in strategic positions around the county in order to ensure the full participation of people with disabilities and their carers in society. Changing Places toilet facilities are different from standard accessible toilets. They provide extra equipment like a hoist and an adult sized changing bench. In the Republic of Ireland there are only 15 Changing Places Toilet Facilities (compared to 1,500 in England and 40 in Northern Ireland, with mandatory legislation for all public buildings pending). www.changingplaces.ie
- B.** To provide and enhance amenities for children and young people, such as playgrounds, parks and sportsgrounds and other gathering spaces such as theatres, skate parks.
- C.** Ensure effective access to childcare provision as an integral element of the overall development process. In particular access to childcare for part-time or casual workers.
- D.** Regenerate and develop existing built-up areas as attractive and viable alternatives to greenfield development
- E.** Facilitate diversification into new employment sectors while supporting traditional industries through training, grants and mentorship programmes
- F.** Make allotments available to increase physical and mental health of a variety of age groups and socio-economic backgrounds and to build relationships through skill-sharing.

6. Rural Development



- A.** Stop the current method of ‘rural resettlement’ until significant supports and infrastructure are put in place. The practice of moving disadvantaged or marginalised people away from their support structures to rural areas where they do not have transport or contacts has not been successful and has in many cases led to further hardship for the families involved. Clare PPN social inclusion college consider that a well-funded and staffed programme of targeted supports would be necessary to make these initiatives successful. Clare PPN Social Inclusion College can see huge value to having young families and remote workers move to and settle in various areas of Clare however in general where this is successful is if the people transferred are self-sufficient and in a position to benefit from all the lifestyle opportunities Clare has to offer.
- B.** Clare PPN Social Inclusion College would like to see vacancies/hoarding and dereliction in town centres targeted with vacancy taxes, or by agreed or compulsory purchase orders in the public interest. Empty units invite vandalism, bring down the vibrancy of town centre and make the pool of available premises smaller and more expensive for potential businesses.
- C.** Clare PPN Social Inclusion College commends Clare County Council for its proactive approach in developing digital hubs. We call on them to continue this work and to plan for increase in working-from-home and a revitalised cottage-industry sector by ensuring that digital hubs are accessible easily and cheaply and that they are promoted to any group who might avail of them. In light of Coronavirus and the consequent shift in work practices CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL need to be proactive in this regard and also along with LEO to consider the networking and collaboration opportunities that the Local Authority can provide.
- D.** As noted in our Environmental Submission, Clare PPN sees considerable value in Clare pursuing ‘organic Clare’ and ‘zero-waste Clare’ strategies. Both of these initiatives would provide economic, social, tourism, and wellbeing gains for the counties if successful.
- E.** Clare PPN Social Inclusion College has received a lot of input around walking and cycling trails in villages for the use of those who live there. There have also been calls for outdoor gym equipment suitable for all ages to be installed in council owned areas. These would have great benefits for help and wellbeing. Upgrading cycle paths and walkways would also help to reduce car dependency. All new ‘ways’ should be accessible for wheelchair and other mobility users. These routes need not follow exiting roadways and would provide pleasant, scenic and healthy modes of transport.

7. Transport and Infrastructure



- A.** As previously mentioned and submitted in Clare PPN’s environmental submission. Clare PPN members believe that there is a need for a rural transport task force in the county and that Clare County Council should convene such a body. This is necessary to reduce carbon emissions and to target rural disadvantage and exclusion. It is also necessary to plan effective and strategic transport infrastructure and to ensure that all existing transport resources work in a linked and coherent way. This task force should have community representation as well as from national transport bodies. It should commit to reviewing current transport policy and resources and to consulting with communities to ascertain the unmet needs of the population of Clare. The ability to access services and amenities, such as education and healthcare, shops and parks, the leisure and social interactions available to us and the prospect of securing employment, all combine to make a real difference to people’s lives.
- B.** Assemble a Community Task Force on Water/Wastewater Management that utilises the significant expertise in the county, to address the ongoing problem of untreated sewage and the effect it has on the future of disadvantaged communities. We note that as of the EPA report released on November 12th 2020 that the 5 areas in which raw untreated sewage is being released into waterways are all now listed as ‘delayed’ for remedial works.
- C.** As previously mentioned Clare PPN Social Inclusion College strongly support the development of Greenways to boost low-carbon, low-cost leisure and inclusive tourism opportunities en route.
- D.** Clare PPN Social Inclusion College consider access to high speed broadband for everyone living in Clare, as a priority, for engagement in education and employment opportunities and to increase social interaction for those living in isolation. Provision of good quality broadband infrastructure is critical for the revitalisation towns, villages and rural areas.
- E.** Clare PPN calls on Clare County Council to work ambitiously with Iarnrod Eireann and other stakeholders to secure a railway spur to Shannon Town/Airport and to support one connecting with University of Limerick (in light of current proposals to significantly upgrade the Ennis-Limerick line by establishing three additional stops). We note Clare County Council’s support for the Draft LSMATS 2040 which was recently published, and which ruled out the Shannon rail spur. We call on Clare County Council to resubmit to this strategy and seek its inclusion. We note that last week saw funding announced for a new study into this exact possibility by Minister for Transport

Eamon Ryan, alongside a €31 million package for support of Shannon and Cork Airports.

- F. We call on Clare County Council to ensure that planning for renewable energy infrastructure is done in conjunction with rural communities and with their full participation and consent (rural areas are where it is most likely to take place) and to encourage community green energy schemes through training, grants and mentorship.

8. Built & Natural Heritage



- A. Clare PPN Social Inclusion College would like to see Clare County Council plan to enhance and upgrade the built environment, to make it safe for older people and those with disabilities and geared toward active, healthy and connected, sociable lives, including providing sufficient energy efficient lighting and safe pathways and cycle ways.
- B. Our Social Inclusion College wanted to see enhanced use of all council owned or managed resources, buildings and heritage or recreation sites by the community- with easy affordable access for community groups and residents and an open invitation to engage on imaginative uses for community celebrations, festivals, arts or youth events. Some of those consulted felt that this is an area in which Clare County Council could help to invigorate the communities it serves without huge investment.
- C. Consider and investigate the possibility of providing a local authority backed scheme for providing insurance cover for community and voluntary groups in the County.
- D. Provide outdoor seating, outdoor gyms and walkways especially where possible at locations of interest for the enjoyment of all ages and mobilities and accessible by public transport.
- E. Support engagement with representatives of local disability rights associations when planning accessibility works to ensure that the perspective of those with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairment needs are taken into account.
- F. Implement the concept of the '10 Minute Town' in the larger towns of Ennis, Shannon and Kilrush to encourage more compact planning regarding public transport, community facilities, shopping, healthcare services and green spaces.

9. Social Community & Cultural Development



- A.** In recent consultations conducted by Clare PPN we heard a repeated demand for well-appointed and managed community space (centres, venues, places for classes, meetings etc) was expressed/Build/buy and staff multi-use community centres in adjoining catchment areas in Clare (eg. in the 20 most populated towns). In light of this Clare PPN social inclusion college consider that as part of the Counties Rural Development Strategy an ambitious plan for multi-purpose community venues possibly co-located with digital hubs and consultation rooms (physiotherapists, counsellors, clinics etc) in key towns or villages served by public transport and staffed by venue managers to ensure access would revitalise the county. It would be possible for existing community centres to be redeveloped in some cases. Such centres, relative to the size of the community, would be of immeasurable value, providing a focus for a myriad of activities, small enterprises, arts & cultural events and secular social occasions.
- B.** Clare PPN social inclusion college feels that Clare County Council could through its own resources act to ensure that the diverse nature of Clare’s community is represented and included. A fund for cultural festivals, a social inclusion celebration, a diversity policy for recruitment and other such initiatives would be greatly welcomed.
- C.** Clare PPN’s recent consultations demonstrated a large demand for community assemblies, for direct engagement in public forums between the Local Authority staff and CE with the community and for Council meetings to be live streamed as already happens in several counties.
- D.** Clare PPN notes that all of our community groups recognise the existence of significant drug and alcohol addiction in County Clare and feel there are very inadequate services for people and families affected. We call on Clare County Council to lead the way on recognising this and understanding that a county without a substantial city in it has a lack of the services available elsewhere for addiction, homelessness and related issues. The local authority itself could seek to provide space for addiction services; for residential care and for affordable counselling
- E.** Clare PPN notes too the need for a ‘wet’ hostel for those unable to adhere to current hostel conditions and again considers that Clare County Council could enable this to be provided.

- F.** Work with local sports partnerships, clubs, communities and partnerships within and beyond sport, to increase physical activity participation in disadvantaged areas.
- G.** Clare PPN Social Inclusion College calls for Clare County Council to continue working toward providing universal access for abled and disabled visitors to historic, built and cultural venues.
- H.** Finally, we would like to ask that Clare County Council liaise with other public bodies and work in a collaborative and cooperative way to deliver multi-agency programmes and regeneration projects to address the housing, health, education and welfare needs of the most-disadvantaged communities in County Clare, in consultation with the communities affected.

We would like to see this current round of observations considered and incorporated into the draft County Development Plan for 2022- 2028. We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission and we welcome any enquiries in regard to it.

Yours sincerely,
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