

## **Public Participation Network (PPN) Climate Conversations 2022**

The recent “Climate Conversation” held by Limerick PPN at the request of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications was attended by LPPN members representing all 3 pillars i.e.; Community/Voluntary, Environment & Social Inclusion.

Three out of the Four Limerick Municipal Districts were represented on the evening:

- Cappamore/Kilmallock
- Limerick Metropolitan
- Newcastle West

By Limerick PPN members from the following organisations/groups:

- Ballybricken 46<sup>th</sup> Scout Group
- Emerging Limerick Filmmakers
- Environmental Trust Ireland
- Extinction Rebellion Limerick
- Foynes & District Community Council
- Maigne Rivers Trust
- Pallas United Soccer Club
- Southill Family Resource Centre

Also in attendance was the Limerick PPN Resource Worker and a representative of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) who attended remotely.

The DECC briefed the participating PPNS and issued them with some guiding questions (reproduced further on in this Report) with the hope of generating a conversation around potential Climate Action engagement barriers from a Social Inclusion perspective but also to hear of any other issues that may be locally specific.

Although suggested questions and guiding topics were provided, the DECC highlighted that their main emphasis was on the importance of participant-led discussion in order to capture what is of prime importance locally in Limerick and to the Limerick PPN members. By identifying the core concerns brought up in PPN discussions, the DECC hope to better understand what issues are pertinent to specific areas or populations.

The following Report was prepared and sent to the DECC based on the discussion that took place on the night.

## Guiding Questions for Discussion

The facilitators of the PPN sessions will be asked to consider the following themes and try to ensure they are discussed throughout the conversation.

1. Climate Literacy
2. Just Transition
3. Transport and travel
4. Energy – a) Homes and Retrofitting and b) Offshore Generation
5. Circular Economy

The following questions can be used as a guide for your discussion. However, we are very keen that this is participant-led and that they discuss whatever they feel is most relevant and important to them with reference to climate change.

- What factors are influencing your views on climate change?
- What consequences do you most associate with climate change?
- As an individual or as an organisation, do you know what you can do, what are you doing and what are you willing to do to address climate change?
- Have you or your organisation been impacted by climate change? How?
- What actions have you and/or your organisation taken to date to combat climate change?
- What are your views on the Government's ambitions to reduce our carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 and make Ireland carbon neutral by 2050?
- What policy areas do you think the government should be focusing on to help combat climate change?
- What are the barriers/challenges your community faces when trying to act on climate change?
- What would you like the Government to do to support you to act?
- How could your Local Authority support you more in your efforts to tackle climate change?
- Where do you get your information on climate change?
- How do you think we could get more people involved in the debate about climate change and motivated to act?

## Just Transition

Addressing climate change and meeting commitments made regarding reducing Ireland's carbon emissions and reaching carbon Neutrality will necessarily require individuals and groups to make changes in their behaviours and activities.

Our group discussed topics relating to each Theme provided. As the discussion continued it was clear that the Just Transition theme was very important to the group and the majority of the conversation relating to the other themes was from this perspective.

Members of the group felt very strongly that to ensure Just transition, measures toward combating Climate Change should work big to small.

- There needs to be a collective response that is equity based.

Measures to combat change will include a financial cost therefore, it should be at the forefront of policy planning that these measures are fair, equitable and inclusive.

To avoid duplication of submissions I have noted under the other headings where there is a link to Just Transition.

---

## Travel and Transportation

- A participant was incurring huge cost for commuting and with his job. He changed roles within the organisation and now has a lot less mileage. Will be working in his locality and will be purchasing an electric car.
- Cost of travel to work for people is a huge factor.- Employers should be given more incentive/ direction to accommodate working from home or blended option where possible.
- Factory worker- moved to all digital at work- paperless  
Company has policy that what they manufacture in Ireland is sold here.  
Environmentally friendly and cost savings for the factory.  
Should be encouraged and incentivised.
- The lack of options for those living rurally and needing to travel for work was acknowledged as difficult to address.
- Those living rurally cannot engage with measures currently being mooted regarding using public transport/ cycling etc and are feeling the brunt of rising fuel costs.

## Climate Literacy

People need to have a narrative that they can buy into. That is to say, buy into and meaningfully engage in crafting. Government and Local Government should reflect this in both policy and their approach to publicising / delivering options.

- It was stated that the climate literacy of young people should be encouraged and nurtured.
- A participant working in a socially disadvantaged area stated that he believes that people he works with would benefit from communications/ campaigns and promotions developed with the use of plain language and supported within community workshops and programs. (links to Just Transition) This participant emphasised that any programs such as above should include resources for staff to roll out these programs.
- Social disadvantage was discussed and a participant described a need for empowering individuals through communities to meaningfully engage with the work and contribute on a manageable level with a goal in mind.
- Education for sustainable development should be at the centre of developing awareness plans/ programs and should be resourced appropriately.
- The local government role of Environmental Awareness officer should be larger and resourced appropriately.
- Some participants who are active in environmental issues stated that while there are opportunities to speak at a government level they felt this did not translate to changing outcomes.
- It was felt that a barrier to participation was a feeling that experts were not being listened to.
- It was stated that research or consultation needed to result in changes or there was no point.
- It was stated that a collaborative partnership of all stakeholders across the community, National and Local government is needed.
- Meaningful public outreach could reduce barriers of understanding

---

## Energy

- a)
- The energy retrofitting schemes are useful for households but it was felt that engaging in these schemes to their fullest extent will raise energy prices and affect those living rurally and on low incomes disproportionately as some of these people are accustomed to using stoves and fires for heat generation.
  - While the grants are generous there is still an outlay required, a significant one in some cases. It was felt that there are a lot of households that would be willing to engage with retrofitting if it was possible to have an additional scheme where the outlay to match grant could be recouped in another manner such as a dedicated loan facility in place.

- It was strongly agreed that alternative and diverse methods of energy production should be funded and supported.
- New LECP plans should have a core ethos of environmentalism. It was noted by a participant who is a PPN Representative on the Limerick LCDC that the energy efficiency and sustainability of projects put forward were well scrutinised.
- There was concern at the continuing development of data centres, nationally as well as in Limerick recently. The amount of energy used by these centres is considerable and participants felt that in the long term this could affect availability for households.

b) It was the opinion of a participant (who works in this industry) that offshore generation will cause energy prices to rise. He gave a breakdown of energy production in Ireland and the costs of setting up offshore generation systems.

It seemed that without the presence of this person, who works in the industry, our views would have been very simple. Wind power, not being a fossil fuel means it has to be good, which may not necessarily be the case (Links to Climate literacy).

---

## Circular Economy

- One of the participants is a secondary school teacher currently working in adult education. She was firm in the belief that school subjects such as Home Economics could strongly support climate awareness and ingrain the attitude of reusing recycling and repurposing (Links to Climate Literacy). During this conversation the group acknowledged that while the cost saving measures of our older parents and grandparents were quirky they also showed a time where food would not be wasted and products purchased for the home would be cared for and not seen as easily replaced. A return of a version of this was mooted as necessary with the amount of waste produced by households.

---

Communities need support to make changes that are not only individualist such as those made within their own homes.

For example, the Tidy Towns is a structure already in place. The criteria has adapted over the years to introduce some enfolded of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It was posited that the ethos of tidy towns could be totally turned to hitting primarily Sustainable development and environmental goals as well as being recognised as such. As a well-established network in many towns and villages across the country it was believed that this would be an excellent route that would not require initial set up processes or costs that another scheme would incur.

- A participant believed that a systematic change was what was required for goals to be effective. A cultural change where the rights of nature is at the core of policy making was stated as being necessary.
- Water conservation and protection of waterways was very important to a number of participants.
- Building communities capacity and increasing civic engagement was seen as a big factor in overcoming barriers to combating climate change.

Local community projects would be ideal to encourage the necessary “buy in” for projects.

- It was stated that Government, both National and Local, should lead by example.