



## 1. Vision

To promote the development of sustainable communities on the basis of a high quality of life where people can live and work and enjoy access to a range of community facilities suitable for all ages and needs.

## 2. Context

This chapter sets out the policies and objectives that Wicklow County Council seeks to achieve in relation to its interaction with, and provision for local communities in County Wicklow. Specifically this chapter deals with Community Development, Social Inclusion, Community Facilities, Children's Facilities, Youth Facilities, Libraries, the Arts and "Outlook" (the Ten Year Strategy for the Social, Economic and Cultural Development of County Wicklow produced by the Wicklow County Development Board). This implementation of the objectives illustrated in this chapter rely on the Office of Community and Enterprise, the new Department created in County Wicklow, to play an important role in supporting the Council to expand its role in community development and advance social inclusion throughout the County.

## 3. Strategy

Recent developments at national level have resulted in all local authorities, including Wicklow County Council, having an expanded role in Community Development. Community Development essentially involves engaging in a way of working which values the participation of communities in setting and achieving positive outcomes in relation to their expressed needs. Community Development therefore is about enabling people to play a role in shaping the society of which they are part. It works towards assisting individuals and groups to identify needs and express viewpoints, which will influence the policies, services and processes that affect their lives.

It is generally accepted that fair and equitable access to infrastructure services is a key factor in providing for sustainable and balanced communities. The quality of life in a community depends not only on the provision of housing, employment and infrastructure support but also on access to social, community and cultural facilities which are fundamental to social cohesion and personal enhancement.

In order to be sustainable a community will require access to essential services such as employment, health care, transport, telecommunications, waste treatment and disposal, leisure and educational opportunities.

The challenge for the Council and the County Development Board will be to act with the various communities in identifying their needs, obtaining resources and supporting programmes to sustain community life.

## 4. Policy

### 4.1 – OUTLOOK

Wicklow County Development Board (CDB) was established to co-ordinate the plans and activities of the main sectors and service providers in County Wicklow, namely: local government, local development, state agencies and social partners. In order to achieve this, Outlook, the strategic plan for the social, economic and cultural development of Wicklow was devised to provide an overall framework within which all development and the delivery of services in Co. Wicklow can occur. Outlook is the product of a comprehensive consultation exercise resulting in the creation of a common vision for a better quality of life for the people of Co. Wicklow.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 and 'A Shared Vision for County/City Development Boards' (DEHLG, 2000) sets out both the statutory and formal links between the County/City Development Board process and their associated Planning Authorities and accordingly "Outlook".

**Policy CI:** The Plan will facilitate the provision of adequate community facilities in accordance with the strategies and recommendations set out in the County Development Board's strategy document Outlook 2002-2012.

### 4.2 – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Wicklow County Council has a long history of engagement with local communities across all of its service areas. In terms of expanding its role in community development, Wicklow County Council now provides a number of opportunities for representatives from the voluntary sector to engage in the local authority decision making process. Community representatives sit on the five Strategic Policy Committees as well as on Wicklow County Development Board.

A vast range and number of voluntary community groups currently operate in County Wicklow and this is clearly illustrated by a recent survey of voluntary groups within the county, which is shown in table 8.1.

Table 8.1

Range of Voluntary Community Groups in County Wicklow (June 2003)	Number
Type Of Group	Number
Sport	371
Art/Culture	34
Social Services	182
Education/Training	31
Community Development	102
Women	28
Tidy Towns/Residents	54
Youth	28
Health/Disability	47
Older People	8
(Total – 885 Groups)	



Sport is clearly the dominant type of voluntary community group in County Wicklow. Voluntary groups involved in the provision of social services and community development are also well represented by large numbers of organisations. Minority groups and minority interest groups are however less well represented amongst the total number of voluntary community groups in County Wicklow.

**Policy C2:** The Council, through the Office of Community and Enterprise, will support the development of a diverse and representative range of voluntary community groups and organisations in County Wicklow.

**Policy C3:** Wicklow County Council is committed to implementing a Development Levy Scheme under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 that will provide for and/or part-fund the development of community facilities including the provision of sport and recreation, arts and cultural facilities.

### 4.3 – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND WICKLOW COUNCIL SERVICES

Wicklow County Council also provides directly and continues to develop a range of community related services, including:

- Arts Office
- Community & Enterprise Unit
- Community Based Economic Development
- Community Based Roads Schemes
- Environment / Tidy Towns
- Environmental Awareness
- Estate Management
- This Council proactively encourages & facilitates Housing Provision by Voluntary non profit Housing Organisations
- Recreational/play/park spaces
- Film Commission
- Fire Service – awareness/ information service
- Heritage
- Library Service
- RAPID Office
- Social Inclusion Unit
- Urban & Village Renewal Schemes

The Office of Community and Enterprise also supports two independent community based networks within the County – Wicklow Communities Networking and Wicklow Community Platform – to enable them make a valuable input into policy formulation at county level.

**Policy C4:** The Council will ensure that Wicklow Communities Networking and Wicklow Community Platform are recognised and supported as the key voluntary networks for informing Community Development policy and activity in County Wicklow as identified in Action 31 of Sustainable Communities in ‘Outlook’.

**Policy C5:** The Council will encourage and advance the cause of community development and community action in order to further the development of sustainable communities in County Wicklow and facilitate voluntary community organisations in improving their community’s quality of life.

### 4.4 – SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social Inclusion is integral to the concepts of Community and Community Development. Social inclusion involves facilitating participation in society, based on equality of opportunity irrespective of economic or social status so that those who experience exclusion are actively involved in decision-making (Outlook, 2002).

Wicklow County Council’s commitment to this area is no more demonstrable than in the fact that it houses one of Ireland’s first Social Inclusion Units. The Unit’s aim is to improve the delivery of all local authority services to the most marginalised in the county by embedding and prioritising social inclusion in all Council policies/procedures and by ensuring that reliable analytical data is gathered and used to assess need and ascertain priority. Wicklow County Council is totally supportive of the objectives and future development of the Unit and its work.

The exclusion of marginalised groups and communities, which is evident nationally, can also be seen in County Wicklow. Disadvantaged groups identified in the Government’s National Action Plan on Poverty, namely: the unemployed or those on low income, the disabled, Travellers, homeless, women, young people, children, older people, the rurally isolated, asylum seekers and refugees, are all represented within County Wicklow.

The Council recognises that the main reasons why these groups find themselves in the margins of society is because they suffer from powerlessness, neglect, inequitable access to quality services and an inequitable access of opportunity. While many organisations have been set up to address this situation (many of whom have a close working relationship with Wicklow County Council) such as Bray Partnership, Wicklow Working Together, Arklow Community Enterprises, Wicklow Rural Partnership, the deprivation on the ground remains critical and unacceptable.

**Policy C6:** It is the policy of Wicklow County Council to ensure appropriate estate management. Encourage and support tenant and resident participation in the management of their estates to create a sense of ownership.

**Policy C7:** The Council is committed to the principle of consultation, especially with marginalised groups, in the future provision of services. The Council will dedicate the time and resources necessary to ensure that what has been created to ensure social inclusion will remain resilient and deep-seated within Council structures.



**Policy C8:** The Council will seek to prioritise its communities of greatest need in such a way as to relieve their marginalised status and enable and empower them to the same level that the majority of society operates.

**Policy C9:** The Council is fully committed to ensuring that all Council services provided will be needs based and will be to the highest standard at all times. The Council is also committed to engaging in the process of poverty proofing in the future provision of Services, to ensure social inclusion pervades every service provided by the Council.

**Policy C10:** The Council is committed to fully engaging with the County Development Board (CDB) structure, the creation of community forum structures, the placing of community and sectoral interests on Strategic Policy Committees and the devising of Housing Strategies, Traveller Accommodation Plans and Homeless Action Plans. In conjunction with these the Council will set up the corresponding structures necessary to implement them in a meaningful and consultative way.

## 4.5 – DISABILITY

Wicklow County Council is committed to disability proofing its services and policies in order to improve delivery to people with disabilities. As evidence of this commitment the Council has adopted the EU wide Barcelona Declaration. This Declaration is about local authorities across the EU committing themselves to creating a more inclusive society for people with disabilities and to establishing local structures for ongoing consultation with advocates of this sector. Wicklow County Council is committed to this aim as well as to implementing a number of specific positive actions.

**Policy C11:** Wicklow County Council recognises the fact that at least 10% of the population have a disability and acknowledges their desire and right to lead as enriching, fulfilling and independent lives as possible. In support of this all Sections of Wicklow County Council will proof their services, policies and procedures to ensure that not only do they not impede on the lives of people with disabilities but that they proactively assist and enable them.

**Policy C12:** Wicklow County Council will have regard to the objectives of “Building for Everyone” published by the National Disability Authority of Ireland to ensure that the needs of people including those with special needs are taken into consideration in design and construction of buildings and facilities.

## 4.6 – COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities provide the infrastructure necessary for the development of sustainable communities. Their purpose is to promote community cohesion and community identity and in doing so combat social isolation and alienation.

The term ‘Community Facility’ covers a variety of amenities, which are responsive to and meet the needs of communities. Essentially there are two strands to community facilities:

- access to services and facilities
- infrastructure to facilitate community development

**Policy C13:** The Council will recognise the division of the term and zoning objective, “Community Facilities” into four separate groups in order to provide clarity to local communities and service providers on a balanced approach to planning provision for such facilities.

- State Community Facilities
- Private Community Facilities
- Local Authority Community Facilities
- Community/Voluntary Community Facilities

**(i) State:**

These are state and central government provided facilities and include VEC run schools and Adult Education centres, Health Board run health/community clinics, Garda Stations, Post Offices etc.

**(ii) Private:**

These are privately initiated, run and owned community facilities and include shops, GP clinics, dentist surgeries, nursing homes, crèches, cinemas etc.

**(iii) Local Authority:**

The provision of these facilities are the function of the local authority which must initiate and provide the following in terms of community facilities; outdoor recreational spaces, playgrounds, parks/open spaces, urban woodlands/nature areas, swimming pools and libraries and graveyards.

**(iv) Communities/Voluntary:**

The initiation of these facilities falls to local community and voluntary groups. Community halls/centres, creches, pitches, sheltered housing, sports and special interest clubs, youth clubs, Churches, religious order and non-denominational run schools, community cultural and art centres.

**Policy C14:** The Council will consult with local communities to ascertain what facilities they want to provide for themselves and zone lands according to those needs within Local Area Plans.

**Policy C15:** Where the need for new community facilities arises directly as a result from new development the applicant/developer will be expected to meet the full cost of that facility.



## 4.6.1 – EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education and training have a key role to play in all three dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, economic and social. It is widely recognised as a key component of a competitive economy and a vibrant society.

The Council seeks to create an environment in which everyone can develop to their full potential to enable them to participate in and contribute to all aspects of social, economic and cultural life. The Council will endeavour to facilitate the provision of the best possible educational facilities at primary, secondary and adult levels, on suitable zoned lands, in conjunction with the Minister and Department of Education and Science.

**Policy C16:** The Council will facilitate the provision of schools by zoning suitable lands in the Local Area Plans.

**Policy C17:** Where lands are zoned for educational/employment use, the Council will promote a mix of educational (primary, secondary, third level and adult education) and where land is zoned for employment use the Council will promote the development of training facilities (privately and/or publicly funded).

**Policy C18:** The Council will pursue a policy to attract an Outreach Educational Facility for third-level students for an appropriate Institute of Technology for degree, diploma and certificate awards.

## 4.7 – PLAY POLICY

In seeking to build socially inclusive and sustainable communities Wicklow County Council recognises the need to plan and provide for all ages, including children in County Wicklow. Wicklow County Council through the Office of Community and Enterprise has responded to the needs of children by preparing a Play Policy for County Wicklow.

The purpose of the Play Policy is to change the culture of thinking on play and provide more opportunities for children to play. This play policy reflects the importance that Wicklow County Council places on the value of play in childhood and the importance of children in our society. It also recognises that changes in today's society are having an impact on children's opportunities to play. The policy makes a clear commitment to play as a right and to ensuring that children and their needs are considered when it comes to policy making and that provision is made to meet their needs.

Play is not just about the provision of facilities. It is also about creating the conditions that facilitate children's play not only in playgrounds but in the wider environment. In addition facilities for children's play do not always have to consist solely of the traditional playground equipment– they can be an interesting and natural environment with features such as a sensory garden, bushes, an interestingly placed tree trunk. Research has shown that for children, a playground is their base for play, somewhere from which to safely explore their neighbourhood.<sup>24</sup> This places an emphasis on safe, enjoyable and attractive play environments. Neighbourhood spaces, estates, parks, streets, libraries, community centres and gardens are as important as dedicated playgrounds.

**Policy C19:** The Council will be guided by Wicklow County Council Play Policy in its approach to play issues and in the adoption of a strategic framework to guide the relevant agencies in the provision and development of play opportunities for the next ten years.

**Policy C20:** The Council will seek to maximise the opportunities for play and support the implementation of the Wicklow County Council Play Policy and its objectives.

## 4.8 – YOUNG PEOPLE, CHILDREN & CONSULTATION

Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. Article 12 of the convention states that the child has the right to express his/her opinion in all matters affecting them. Ireland's National Children's Strategy gives effect to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition the Local Government Act 2001 outlines a set of responsibilities for local authorities with regard to building citizenship and social inclusion. These responsibilities include facilitating and promoting interest and involvement in local government affairs and in particular promoting interest among young people in democracy and in community and civic affairs.

**Policy C21:** The Council will support and develop effective structures for the participation of young people in the democratic and decision-making process of local government politics.

It will also be involved in developing active citizenship programmes and awareness raising programmes appropriate and relevant for its youth population.

<sup>24</sup> "The Children have nowhere to play – We need a playground", Sugrath, 2000



## 4.9 – SPORTS AND RECREATION POLICY

In addition to the Play Policy, Wicklow County Council has also developed a Sports and Recreation Policy. The implementation of this policy combined with the Wicklow County Council Arts Plan and Library Development Plan offers a variety of opportunities for youth to participate in community life in County Wicklow.

Wicklow County Council Sports and Recreation Policy recognises the importance that sport and recreation contributes to the quality of life of individuals, communities and the county as a whole. It will be the overarching policy document that provides a strategic approach, which includes the identification of deficiencies, needs and priorities and the inclusion of underpinning principles of social inclusion and sustainable development framework. Its implementation will be carried out in partnership and co-operation, to enable all members of the county to have equal access to sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for participating in the sport or recreation of their choice.

To date Wicklow County Council's role in sport and recreation has included:

- Planning provision for sport and recreation facilities, both open space and built facilities
- The provision, by lease or sale, of grounds to sporting clubs and communities
- Sports grant allocation in the County Council Community Grants scheme
- Sponsorship of Wicklow GAA county teams
- Provision and maintenance of public open spaces
- Provision and maintenance of walkways and public right of ways
- Maintenance of beaches and provision of lifeguards
- Provision and maintenance of picnic areas
- Provision of play facilities and wider child-friendly policies (see related Play policy for Wicklow County Council)

**Policy C22:** Wicklow County Council will work to contribute to the improvement of the health and well being of the inhabitants of County Wicklow and to facilitate participation in sport and recreation. This work will be guided by the principles of sustainable development and social inclusion.

**Policy C23:** The Council will be guided by the Sports and Recreation Policy in the provision and expansion of sport and recreation opportunities in County Wicklow for the next ten years. In addition the policy will inform the development levy scheme for community facilities, in particular the provision of sport and recreation facilities.

**Policy C24:** Facilities for football, hurling, golf, athletic clubs, etc. should normally be located close to towns or villages, on unserviced agricultural land. The Council may consider providing sites for these purposes or may be prepared to make financial or other assistance available, subject to reasonable access being made available to the public and to reasonable safeguards for the continued use of the land as open space.

**Policy C25:** Protection of Open Space and Recreational Lands  
The redevelopment for alternative uses of open space and recreational lands whether owned by private recreational clubs or publicly owned, will normally be resisted by the Council unless suitable alternative recreational facilities can be provided in a convenient location.

## 4.10 – ARTS PLAN

The Arts create opportunities for the cultural development of all the community. In addition it offers all the community, young, old and minority groups, a creative outlet and an alternative to sport and active recreation.

In order to provide for the existing and future development of the Arts in County Wicklow the Council has developed the Wicklow County Arts Plan. A number of objectives and actions have been identified in the Arts Development Plan and these will be reflected in increased resources and support to the arts community from Wicklow Local Authorities, Statutory Agencies, Local Development Agencies, the private sector and the wider community.

**Policy C26:** The Council will ensure the development of the arts so that everyone in County Wicklow may have meaningful experiences in the arts.

**Policy C27:** The Council will seek to maximise the opportunities for the Arts and support the implementation of the Wicklow County Arts Plan and its policies.

## 4.11 – LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The purpose of the public library is to support the community's needs for education, information, recreation, arts and culture. The public library is a publicly funded resource providing a cost-effective means to equity of access.

With thirteen branches throughout County Wicklow each providing free internet access, the Council regards the library service as an important resource in promoting its policy on social inclusion and in providing public access to the Information Society. The library is a means to ensure support for literacy, independent learning and distance education.

**Policy C28:** The Council aims to ensure that a modern public library facility will be available to each community it serves and is committed to the development of the County Library Service through the implementation of the Library Development Plan 2002 – 2006.





## 4.12 – CHILDCARE FACILITIES

**Policy C29 Childcare facilities:** The Council will facilitate the provision of adequate childcare facilities as part of residential, town centre, large retail and employment developments and such facilities shall be required in accordance with the Council's Residential Development Standards and Urban Development Standards set out in Chapter 5.

**Policy C30:** The Council will encourage and give special consideration to public and private crèche facilities of the highest professional standard for childcare and play in rural communities where there is an existing residential development or dwelling and give due regard to National Policy on Childcare (Childcare Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities).

**Policy C31 Community, Sports, Arts and Institutional Facilities:** The Council will facilitate the provision of childcare facilities in a sustainable manner compatible with land use and transportation policies, to encourage local economic development and to assist in addressing disadvantage.

**Policy C32 Residential Development and Childcare Facilities:** Childcare facilities should be provided for on larger new residential developments unless there are significant reasons to the contrary. Generally one childcare facility with places for 20 children should be provided for each 75 dwellings more or less (unless it can be demonstrated that having regard to the existing geographic distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of the area that this level of childcare facilities is not required). Such facilities should be located and designed so that they will not cause a nuisance to existing or future residents, and that customers vehicles can turn without causing a hazard or congestion. Adequate parking for staff and customers should also be provided or available.

## 4.13 – HEALTH SERVICES

**Nursing Home:** The need for nursing homes in the county is continuing to grow. Such facilities should be integrated wherever possible into the established residential areas of the towns, where residents can avail of reasonable access to local services.

**Policy C33:** The Council will encourage the improvement of existing nursing homes and will promote the development of new nursing homes throughout the County.

**Policy C34:** The Council would support the improvement of public and private health services throughout the county and in particular the establishment of improved facilities for the elderly and those with long term illness and that greenfield sites be considered.

## 4.14 – OPEN SPACE PROVISION OBJECTIVES

**Policy C35 Public Open Space Provision:** The Council will make provision for a hierarchy of parks, open spaces and outdoor recreation areas within towns so that the population can participate in a wide range of active and passive recreational pursuits within easy reach of their homes and places of work, in accordance with "A Parks Policy for Local Authorities" published by the Department Of Environment, 1987.