

# Kerry Local Authorities

## Access for All Implementation Plan 2008-2015



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## **Executive Summary**

The Access for All Implementation Plan for Kerry Local Authorities 2008-2015 sets out the legislative and policy background, Kerry Local Authority's approach to date, the outcome of access audits, the channels and results of consultation, and the system used to prioritise works.

The Implementation Plan consists of six key areas.

The first section "Introduction" presents the context for the plan, outlining the work of Kerry Local Authorities in implementing the Barcelona Declaration 2003-2006 and identifying the key aspects of the 2005 Disability Act that underpins the Kerry Local Authorities Access for All Implementation Plan 2008-2015. The Introduction also makes reference to the statutory and regulatory requirements, such as enforcing Part M of the Building Regulations, that support the Implementation Plan and outlines the key principles which have informed the Plan.

The second section "Approach", details the mechanisms that will be used by Kerry Local Authorities to organize the actions associated with the Implementation Plan. These include the use of the learning from the Barcelona Team who have driven the disability agenda using an integrated approach and intensive awareness training sessions for staff, etc.

The Senior Management Team will oversee implementation of the Plan and will set up the Implementation Team to see the objectives in the Plan delivered.

Once the Elected Council has adopted the Plan the delivery of the programme will be through the Annual Operational Plans of each Directorate. This section also sets out the monitoring and reporting arrangements that will be in place and refers to the Corporate Policy Group who will oversee the implementation Plan.

The third section sets out the criteria for the “Access Audits” carried out by Kerry Local Authorities in 2006 and 2007 by its own trained staff. The completed Access Audits will detail the remedial actions necessary to make identified areas and buildings accessible for all its customers.

The fourth section is the “Consultation” process Kerry Local Authorities has engaged in to have a fully inclusive input into the implementation plan. The Sectoral Plan of the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government also asks that Kerry Local Authorities will consult with the major transport providers in the County. It also explains the public consultation process that Kerry Local Authorities undertook in October 2007.

The fifth section “Prioritization Methodology” contains an outline of how Kerry Local Authorities will make informed decisions in relation to prioritizing actions. The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Sectoral Plan states that *“Priority will be given to local authority buildings and other facilities to which access is most frequently required as well as accessible public footpaths streets and crossings in urban areas.”*

A secondary method of prioritisation was informed by the results of the public consultation process.

The final section “Works Schedule” confirms that an annual works programme will be prepared by each department in line with the annual operational planning process and having regard to the results of the access audits and the consultation process undertaken. It is important to note that the DOEHLG Sectoral plan states that:

“In drawing up their implementation plans, Kerry Local Authorities will have regard to the funding and staffing resources available to them for implementation.”

The plan was formally adopted by all four Kerry Local Authorities on the following dates:

Kerry County Council	17 <sup>th</sup> December 2007
Tralee Town Council	7 <sup>th</sup> January 2008
Killarney Town Council	14 <sup>th</sup> January 2008
Listowel Town Council	14 <sup>th</sup> January 2008

## **Introduction**

Over the past number of years, Kerry Local Authorities have been actively engaged in working towards accessibility for all to its services.

The four Local Authorities in Kerry (Kerry County Council, Tralee Town Council, Killarney Town Council and Listowel Town Council) proactively encourage equal opportunity for persons with disabilities and support their active participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the community.

### **1.1 The Barcelona Declaration**

The aim of the Barcelona Declaration Plan 2003-2006 was “to make Kerry a more assessable environment for all. This includes the physical environment, awareness raising, information and access to decision-making processes.”

In 2001 Kerry Local Authorities decided on an integrated approach to implementing the Barcelona Declaration. A cross sectional team was formed which drew up a profile of Kerry Local Authorities service provision for people with disabilities. In addition to identifying current areas of good practice the team also detailed areas for improvement. The Barcelona Declaration Plan 2003-2006 provided a strategic framework, to make all services accessible to everyone. Arising out of the Plan Kerry Local Authorities have actively promoted awareness of the need for our services to be disability proofed, trained all staff in providing equal access to all services and modified some of our physical infrastructure to provide such access.

In recognition of our endeavors Kerry Local Authorities have received numerous awards including the Accessibility award in Killarney, Kerry County Council receiving the “positive to Disability Award” culminating in Kerry Local Authorities receiving the overall winner in 2005 and 2006 of the O2 Ability Award for the non private sector.

## **1.2 The Disability Act 2005**

The 2005 Disability Act states that each local authority will, within three months of completing an accessibility audit; draw up an implementation plan setting out a programme of actions and detailed costings, which will give effect to the commitments and objectives contained in the Disability Act 2005 and in the Departmental Sectoral Plans.

Kerry Local Authorities are committed to meeting their obligations under the Disability Act 2005 and the Sectoral plan prepared by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in accordance with the provisions of Sections 31 & 36 of the Disability Act 2005.

Part 3 of the Disability Act deals with access to Public Buildings, Services and Sectoral Plans and Part 5 deals with Public Service Employment.

Whilst there are six Department Sectoral Plans in all, the Kerry Local Authorities will primarily be engaging with and working to the Sectoral Plans associated with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOEHLG) and the Department of Transport.

### **1.3 Accessibility in Kerry**

Kerry County Council appointed the Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Affairs as the designated disability Access Officer, in accordance with Section 26 of the Disability Act.

In each of the Town Councils the position of Access Officer is assigned to the Town Clerk of that authority to:

- Co-ordinate the authority's response to Parts 3 and 5 of the Act
- Serve as an initial point of contact between the local authority and local disability groups and people with disabilities
- Ensure that new services or facilities provided after the commencement of the Act by local authorities shall be accessible to people with disabilities
- Manage the accessibility audits being carried out throughout the County

In accordance with the provisions of Section 38 of the Act the Customer Complaints Officer has been appointed as the designated "Inquiry Officer" to investigate all complaints and prepare a report in accordance with the procedures laid down in Section 39 of the Act.

A "Disability Liaison Officer" and an "Assistant Access Officer" were also appointed to oversee the disability strategy for Kerry Local Authorities.

### **1.4 Statutory and Regulatory Requirements**

Under its Statutory obligations Kerry Local Authorities are charged with the responsibility for administering the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme and the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme and for ensuring that its social housing programme meets the needs of people with disabilities.



Under its regulatory obligations the Authorities must ensure compliance with all building regulations, ensure that all public buildings are brought into compliance with the current Part M section of the Building Regulations. The Disability Access Certification process proposed in the Building Control Bill will require Kerry Local Authorities to confirm that the design of any new commercial building or apartment block complies with current Part M before the development commences.

### **1.5 The Implementation Plan- key principles**

The Kerry Local Authorities Access for All Implementation Plan has been informed by the Guidance Framework document issued by the Local Government Management Services Board in June 2006, which recommends:

- Strong Senior Management Team strategic planning
- Implementation and Review by a multi-functional Steering Group
- Involvement and consultation with local groups representing people with disabilities, having regard to the “Guidelines on Customer Consultation” issued by the Local Government Customer Service Group in July 2005
- Embedding the Implementation Plan in the Corporate Planning and Annual Operational Planning of local authorities

Kerry Local Authorities are committed to the development of appropriate mechanisms for disability proofing decision-making in their Councils, in line with the “Disability Proofing Template for Local Government”. Priority will be given in the implementation plan to local authority buildings and other

facilities to which access is most frequently required, including accessibly throughout the external environment of public footpaths, streets and crossings and the physical interface with public transport facilities. Local authorities will also ensure that, as far as practicable, new services or built facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities.

## **Approach**

The commitment the Irish Government gave in 1995 to making Ireland a more accessible environment for people with disabilities through the Barcelona Declaration has been the guide for Kerry Local Authorities to ensuring that the built environment, services and decision-making processes are becoming more accessible.

The Senior Management Team approach taken was to drive their commitment to the National Disability Strategy throughout the organisation by leading the programme and ensuring that their approach is cascaded down through their Senior Staff to team business unit leaders, all supervisory staff and all relevant individual staff members.

In 2001 Kerry Local Authorities adopted an integrated approach to implementation of the Barcelona Declaration and a cross sectional team involving key staff was established. The Barcelona Declaration Team produced a profile of Kerry Local Authorities service provision for people with disabilities and identified areas of good practice and areas where the Authorities could improve.

Examples of good practice include:

- the development of Sensory garden in Tralee Town Park
- specially adapted houses in Kerry Local Authority housing schemes
- Employment of persons with disabilities

- Improved access to our offices and public libraries including the provision of facilities for persons with ambulatory and hearing difficulties.

In all of the above examples the required capital improvements were assigned to the relevant Section Head for implementation.

Kerry Local Authorities have been intensively engaged over the past 2 years in disability awareness training with its workforce. Disability awareness training, reviewing services and increasing awareness of equality for all is promoted through a dedicated Equality Officer with the Leading Equality and Diversity (LEAD) team.

## **2.1 An Integrated Approach**

The disability/ability agenda for Kerry Local Authorities is driven at Senior Management level, with the direct involvement of the Director of Corporate Services in the implementation of Kerry Local Authority's Disability Access for All Strategy. The direct involvement of Senior Management has been part of the success of Kerry County Council and was identified as such by the awarding panel of O2 National Ability Awards in 2005 and 2006.

Embedding the Implementation Plan in Kerry Local Authorities is a key priority for the Senior Management Team, some of whom are also the Town Managers for Tralee, Killarney and Listowel. Their active support of the expanding role of the Local Authorities in the equality and social inclusion agenda is one of the keys to successfully embedding the plan within the culture of the Local Authorities.

An Implementation Team will coordinate the ongoing actions set out in the implementation plan. Membership of the Implementation Team will include: The Access Officers for each of the 4 local authorities, the Disability Liaison Officer, the Equality Officer and Senior Staff with responsibility for the implementation of the key actions in this plan.

Persons with disabilities employed by Kerry Local Authorities will be consulted and encouraged to participate in the membership of this team, as their contributions in the implementation of the Barcelona Declaration has proven invaluable.

## **2.2 Organising Actions into the Kerry Local Authority Corporate Plan**

A Draft of the Implementation Plan was brought before the 4 local authorities, Kerry County Council, Tralee Town Council, Killarney Town Council, Listowel Town Council, and adopted in December 2007 and January 2008. The delivery of its programme of works will be scheduled through the Kerry Local Authorities Corporate Planning process.

In order to 'bed in' the culture of awareness around access for all issues, the Corporate planning process will be linked with the access for all strategy ensuring that the Corporate Plan – identifies what the commitments of Kerry Local Authorities are and sets the vision for the implementation of it's strategy.

The current Kerry Local Authorities Corporate Plan is from 2005 to 2009. The Corporate Plan will cascade down through the Annual Operational planning process, of the four Councils, with disability proofing being

incorporated into each Department's business plan. Key Performance Indicators will be identified and an associated works programme scheduled.

### **2.3 Monitoring and reporting on the work of the Implementation Plan**

Kerry Local Authorities are committed to operating a cycle of monitoring, review and recording of the Implementation Plan. The Elected Members; through the Corporate Policy Group will guide the Implementation Plan and monitor its progress on a yearly basis as the programme of work is rolled out. Reports on progress will be included in the Draft Annual Report as prepared under Section 221 of the Local Government Act 2001. The adopted Annual Report will contain a review of the overall implementation of the plan.

## **Access Auditing**

Kerry Local Authorities commenced working on its accessibility audits in 2006 and these were substantially completed by the statutory deadline of the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007. To date significant long-term benefits have accrued from the Access Audit process. An extensive training programme was undertaken by key staff to support conducting the accessibility audits from internal resources.

Audits were carried out on:

- All roads and streets
- All pavements and pedestrian crossings
- Public buildings
- Public parks
- Amenities and open spaces
- Heritage sites in the ownership, management or control of the local authority
- Public libraries
- Harbours within the control of the local authority
- 13 blue flag beaches in Kerry
- Graveyards

This work has been further build on through the delivery of a disability awareness training programme for internal staff.

In addition to raising awareness in relation to a wide range of accessibility issues, the process itself has served to increase auditing capacity 'in house' (the internal staff are now a valuable resource for Kerry Local Authorities), to a far greater degree than engaging consultants external to the local authorities.

The Kerry Local Authorities access audit process has been a significant 'first step' in embedding the implementation plan across its services.

The work on the Access Audits was carried out in conjunction with a person with a disability. The audit process itself has helped to raise awareness of disability access issues amongst staff, and the general public. The completed Access Audits will detail the remedial actions necessary to make identified areas and buildings accessible for people with disabilities.



## **Consultation**

Part of Kerry Local Authorities success in mainstreaming services has been its extensive consultation process with groups and organisations representing people with disability, together with individuals living and working in the community. There was a media campaign, using Radio and print, to advertise the public consultation meetings, venues and times, also asking any interested party or individuals to submit their input to the Access for All Implementation Plan for Kerry Local Authorities through the use of web, audio or collected from people in any other appropriate format. The Community and Voluntary Forum were asked to participate with the implementation team to plan the consultation process and input into the Draft Implementation Plan. The public consultation took place in October 2007.

A Summary of the principle outcomes of consultation to date:

We have engaged in the consultation process with the relevant Local Authority Departments to have them set down the costings and timeframes for the works identified in their Accessibility Audit reports.

As per the Sectoral Plan for the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government we also consulted with the main transport providers in the County. Coherence between various state agencies and service providers is important for evaluating those issues that should receive priority.

A) Bus Eireann

- B) Iarnrod Eireann
- C) Taxi and Hackney Regulator
- D) Harbours (Shannonferries Ltd)
- E) Kerry Community Transport
- F) Kerry Airport

A) Bus Eireann, stated that at present they have no fully accessible buses operating in Kerry , but that as per the Sectoral Plan for the Department of Transport there is a programme of upgrading the entire bus fleet over the coming years. They were unable to give a specific date for Kerry buses to be fully accessible.

B) Iarnrod Eireann stated that as per the Sectoral plan for the Department of Transport, there is a national programme to upgrade all trains and stations over the coming years. At present they are upgrading the Cork to Dublin line, Mallow has recently been upgraded. However, they were unable to give a timeline for the Mallow/Tralee line to be upgraded. All stations in Kerry were reasonably accessible, but work needed to be carried out to bring them up to best practice standards.

C) Taxi And Hackney Regulator who are the regulatory agency for all taxis and hackneys in the state are in the process of compiling data from an audit of all taxi ranks and their condition in the whole country. This data will include the numbers of ranks, accessibility issues, signage, shelters etc. This they hope to publish before the end of 2007.

They are also engaged in putting together best practice guidelines and a substantial vehicle standards consultation process this year, hoping to bring this into law in mid 2008.

They stated that there are 15 active wheelchair taxi licenses currently in Kerry as of mid July 2007.

D) Harbours in Kerry were audited by Kerry County Council and identified Tarbert, Portmagee, Kenmare and Ballinskelligs as the primary harbours that carried passengers from them. There were some works identified that could be carried out to improve access to these facilities, however, there were cost implications that would prohibit making all piers and harbours fully accessible in Kerry.

Shannonferries Ltd. Who operate out of Tarbert stated that they were well regulated through their Licensing requirements and stated that they carried all transport normally carried by road on and off the ferry. They also stated that due to constraints of maritime design requirements (bulkheads) they were unable to provide fully accessible toilets.

E) Kerry Community Transport stated that they were moving from being a pilot project to a mainstream transport programme for the Country at large i.e. each county would now operate a community service. They are at present putting together their 3 year plan for 2008 – 2010 for Kerry Community Transport. They have 6 fully accessible buses mainly in North and East Kerry and used private operators for

most of their journeys (100 services and 100,000 passenger journeys approx. per year) They noted a change in private operators recently from not wanting to know about accessible transport to actively looking at solutions for their sector.

F) Kerry Airport stated that they are in the process of building a new facility and that this will meet all Part M requirements for new buildings. The old terminal is accessible and regularly deals with many groups with special needs e.g. trips to Lourdes etc. The access into Kerry Airport is very good and a new footpath laid into the village of Farranfore.

The role of the Community and Voluntary Forum, represented on the County Development Board was crucial to the Implementation Plan for Kerry Local Authorities. The Community and Voluntary Forum are a significant source of information to the project. A sub group was formed to discuss all aspects of the public consultation process and proved invaluable to the planning of the overall approach.

The first consultation we engaged in was with a small cross sectoral group invited through the Community and Voluntary Forum that met in the Tralee Library on September 14<sup>th</sup> 2007, to offer their input into the design of the public consultation process. This group decided the venues we would use and some aspects of the methodology used in the consultation process. Their input has been very positive and will ensure that the consultation process works well in Kerry as we roll out the Access for All Implementation Plan.

Following on from the first consultation meeting with a cross Sectoral group from the Community and Voluntary Forum we designed the process for consultation with the wider population of Kerry in order to ensure we engaged with as many people as possible.

To this end we ran an advertising campaign which consisted of half page ads in the local newspapers and where possible Mass leaflets/community leaflets and extensive use of the local radio stations. We also distributed letters of invitation to all the groups signed up with the C. and V. Forum and these groups in turn contacted all their members.

There was a freephone number made available as was an e-mail contact address and we set up a presence on the [www.Kerrycoco.ie](http://www.Kerrycoco.ie) website.

We then held eight public meetings in the following Towns:

<b>Tralee</b>	Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> October 2007	7.30pm	Meadowlands Hotel.
<b>Castleisland</b>	Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup> October 2007	11.00am	An Ríocht Clubhouse
<b>Listowel</b>	Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2007	7.30pm	Seanchaí Centre
<b>Caherciveen</b>	Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> October 2007	11.00am	The Ring of Kerry Hotel
<b>Killorglin</b>	Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> October 2007	7.30pm	Killorglin Library.
<b>Killarney</b>	Monday 22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2007	7.30pm	Dromhall Hotel

<b>Kenmare</b>	Tuesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2007	11.00am	Adult Education Centre
<b>An Daingean</b>	Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> October 2007	7.30pm	Dingle Scellig Hotel

There was a very healthy level of debate overall from the consultation process. For a summary of Main Points in the Consultation Process please see Appendix 1.

## **Prioritisation Methodology**

Prioritization principles employed by Kerry Local Authorities will be informed by and compliant with the legislative requirements of the Disability Act 2005 and target dates set out in the relevant Sectoral plans.

In relation to prioritisation, the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government's Sectoral plan states that::

“Priority will be given to local authority buildings and other facilities to which access is most frequently required as well as accessible public footpaths streets and crossings in urban areas.”

It also states that:

“Kerry Local Authorities will prioritise the upgrading of bus stops on roads where wheelchair accessible buses, if there are any, are in service or are being phased in, in line with the Department of Transport's Sectoral plan.”  
(4.19.2)

Initial prioritization will centre on the perceived levels of usage e.g. public buildings and spaces; this will be done in conjunction with the Section Heads of all relevant Departments. They have been consulted with regard to prioritising the works they are directly responsible for, from the accessibility audits carried out in their areas.

Secondary prioritisation of actions was informed by the public consultation process.

This process included a media campaign to as wide an audience as possible in Kerry, to feedback any suggestions from any interested parties or individuals and was done in conjunction with the eight public meetings held in each of the Electoral areas in the County, Tralee, Killarney, Listowel, Killorglin and Dingle as stated previously in section 4.

The Budgetary position of Kerry Local Authorities will dictate the pace and level of works carried out over the next eight years.



## **Works Schedule**

### **Introduction**

This section which is the core of the Implementation Plan, sets out the total costed set of actions which address Kerry Local Authority's response to the totality of the requirements of the Disability Act 2005 and the Sectoral plan, having completed the access audit in 2007. Actions are set out in order of priority subject to the availability of €1.6m (approx) per annum.

Information concerning progress to date is also entered.

This spreadsheet will be updated as works progress. It is a working document to be reviewed periodically, and will be referred to in the Annual Reports and other internal reporting documents such as the Senior Management Group Reports etc.

The Sectoral plan states that:

"In drawing up their implementation plans, Kerry Local Authorities will have regard to the funding and staffing resources available to them for implementation." (4.3.2)

Kerry Local Authorities have secured funding in 2005 to 2007 from the DOEHLG under the Disability Strategy. Funding for the Kerry Local Authorities Access for All Plan has been prepared on the basis that the bulk of costs associated with the Implementation Plan will be met from its own resources. It is likely that the majority of this funding will have to be provided

from our own resources as the indications are that the level of funding coming from Central Government on an annual basis will be minimal. The mainstreaming of existing services and disability proofing of new services and facilities will impact across programme areas and it is anticipated that the majority of projects will be funded from the relevant programme areas.

If funding is provided from Central Government it will be an objective of Kerry Local Authorities to complete the objectives of this Plan in a shorter timeframe.

Kerry Local Authorities will adopt a realistic approach in relation to the projects that can be undertaken in the timeframe of the Implementation Plan, while mindful of their legal obligations under the Disability Act 2005 and the requirements of the Sectoral plan. Where actions will require additional resources, the resources required will be identified and itemised; and provision made for them when resources become available.

It is an objective of the Plan to meet our requirements where practical and appropriate under the Disability Act by 2015.

Initial budgetary estimates submitted for the various actions will be updated periodically, index linked to the 2007 baseline.

Kerry Local Authorities are committed to its Access for All Implementation Plan and will work in consultation with interested parties to ensure that Kerry stays to the forefront in delivering on its responsibilities under the Disability Act 2005.

Please see Appendix 2 for summary of costs.

## Appendix 1

A Summary of the key issues raised at the Public Consultation Meetings are as follows:

- 1 Pedestrian crossings were highlighted as areas of concern and where appropriate they should be equipped with audible systems.
- 2 Good quality Footpaths were high on people's agenda.
- 3 Pathways in graveyards and access into same was a theme that came up.
- 4 Public transport and taxis in particular were discussed.
- 5 The regulatory role of the local authorities and their enforcement roles.
- 6 Issues of parking on footpaths etc. also featured.
- 7 Lack of disabled parking spaces.
- 8 Wheelie bins and other obstructions on footpaths.
- 9 Access difficulties and Designer's awareness of them.

A summary of findings from Q.4/Q.6 on the Submission/Comment Sheet (copy attached):

We received fifty one written submissions before the deadline of the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2007 from the public consultation process. There were 6 questions asked on the Comment Sheet and two of the more important questions are summarised below.

The answers received on question 4, (the top priority actions) are broadly in line with the above main points from the meetings themselves. We will feed in this valuable feedback into the works schedule identified in the audits.

The information we got from the more strategic Question 6 is summarised as follows.

We asked people to rate the four following areas in order of importance, 1 being extremely important, 2 important, 3 somewhat important, 4 not important

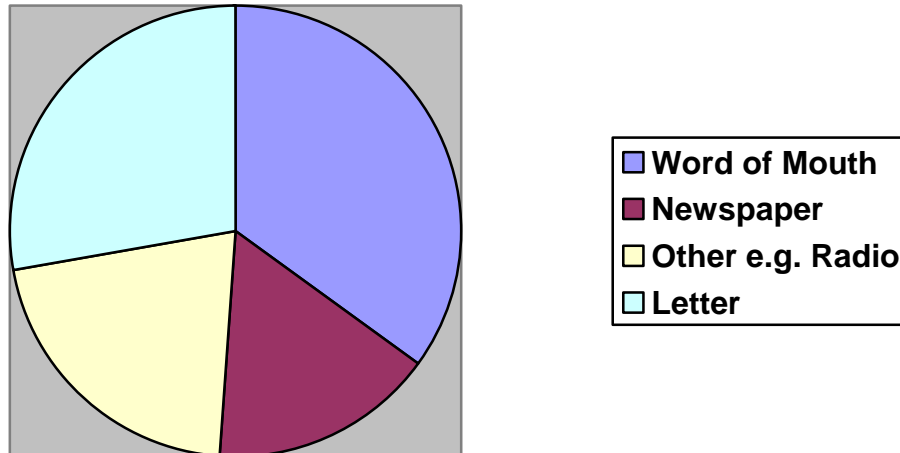
	1	2	3	4
Access to information	16	15	7	1
Physical Access	30	4	4	
Auditory & Sensory Access	9	11	5	10
Access to Decision Making	13	9	6	9

As can be clearly seen Physical Access is top of the priority list followed closely by Access to information.

## Appendix 1 Cont.

### The Consultation Process October 15<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> 2007

#### 1.1 How did people around the County hear about the Consultation Process?



#### 1.2 How many people attended the eight consultation meetings and how many submissions were received?

	Numbers attending	Number of submissions
Caherciveen	17	4
Castleisland	13	0
An Daingean	3	2
Kenmare	9	0
Killarney	14	8
Killorglin	6	5
Listowel	21	18
Tralee	16	14

<b>8 Consultation Meetings held</b>	
Total number of people attending	99
Total number of submissions received	51