**Submission to Kerry County Council from Rathmore Social Action Group Youth Wing.**

We are writing on behalf of the Youth Wing of Rathmore Social Action Group (SAG). We are youth based in the wider Rathmore area from the ages of 12 to 18. The SAG was founded in 1975 to give young people an opportunity to become involved in community work and since then we have worked to create recreational activities for youth and to support older people in our community and raise money for the developing world. We have, over the years, worked in collaboration with Kerry County Council and other government bodies with great success.

We felt it was important for the Kerry Development Plan to have a voice for young people. We met as a group of young people and decided that although there were lots of chapters that would benefit from our views, we would provide our feedback on chapter six as this was the chapter that had a specific objective on young people “Work with the relevant agencies and authorities to advance the physical, social, and cultural needs of children and young people” (KCDP6-47). While we welcome this objective, we feel a commitment to advance our needs is not visible throughout the plan and KCC could do more to integrate this objective throughout their own plan. After discussing a broad range of issues that affect us as young people in Rathmore we decided, by consensus, to bring our top 3 issues in this submission.

Firstly, we believe KCC should show a stronger commitment to support a diverse evening/nightlife that is suitable for all ages including youth. As youth we would like spaces where alcohol is absent, and we can have safe spaces to meet with friends. This could also link to a rural transport programme to provide safe transport to evening/night facilities. This could be built into your objectives under 4.4.2.3 as well as being more directly in chapter 6. While in Rathmore we are fortunate to have a Social Club run by the SAG this is not true for all areas and is not directly supported through your objectives.

Secondly, we feel that the plan does not adequately separate the needs of children and youth under KCDP 6-47. We believe that there should be a more direct commitment to recognise that the group “children and young people” is extremely diverse and could potentially cover people from 0-25 years. We could ask for a particular commitment to differentiate these needs to ensure equitable responses to our different needs – as teenagers want to meet and hang out with our friends in safe places. For instance, we would love to see more playgrounds that are suitable for teenagers, safe walking areas, gathering spaces for teenagers (e.g. where there are things like pool tables or other activities) and support for non-traditional sports especially ones for teenage girls. It would be very beneficial if the council were to provide more financial support for youth facilities in our county and include the development of youth facilities under a scheme similar to the sports grant scheme.

Thirdly, we welcome the objective “to facilitate and support the actions of the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy to promote inclusion, protect rights and to improve quality of life and wellbeing for Kerry LGBTI+ community to enable them to participate fully in the countries social, economic, cultural and political life” (KCDP 6.2.7). We would also like to see commitments to recognise the many specific issues that all young people are encountering such as bullying and exclusion, both online and in person. We in the Social Action Group strongly believe in inclusion and equality for all and we believe that we should strive to ensure that this is reflected in the actions that follow from the county plan.

We thank you for taking the time to listen to our views and hope that you will take them into account when you finalise your plans. We are very happy to talk more to KCC if they would like to hear more of our views on the future development of the Rathmore area and Kerry in general.

Ciarraí Abú