

**Minute of the Climate and Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee held on the 16<sup>th</sup>  
October, 2020, via Microsoft Teams**

**PRESENT:** Cllr. Rory O'Connor, Chairman  
Cllr. Dermot O'Brien  
Cllr Peir Leonard  
Cllr. Lourda Scott  
Cllr. Jodie Neary  
Mr. Gary McKenzie  
Ms. Rhona Lennox  
Ms. Sharon Jackson  
Ms. Annette Vaucanson

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Ms. Breege Kilkenny Director of Services  
Ms. Theresa O'Brien, Senior Executive Officer  
Ms. Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer  
Ms. Mary Cahill, Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer  
Mr. Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer  
Ms. Sorcha Walsh, Senior Planner  
Ms. Bernadette Harvey, Executive Planner

**Item 1 To note the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020.**

Cllr. L. Scott requested that the Minutes of the Meeting be circulated to the Members within 7 to 10 days of the meeting to allow the Members follow up on any discrepancies.

She requested that the action points be included In the Minutes.

Ms. T. O'Brien stated that the Minutes were a record of decisions taken at the meeting. Action Points could be included as a separate document as the Minutes were a public document and would be published on the Council's website for members of the public to view. It was agreed to discuss this under Any Other Business.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020, were proposed by Cllr. L. Scott, seconded by Cllr. P. Leonard and agreed.

**Item 2: Review of the County Development Plan – update in regard to how Climate Action is being incorporated into the review of the County Development Plan.**

Ms. S. Walsh, Senior Planner, gave an update to the Members. She stated that a draft Plan was currently being prepared and it was hoped that same would be forwarded to the Members of the Council before the end of the year. The current Development Plan covers Climate Action very extensively. The County Development Plan contains 10 appendices. One of these appendices is a chapter on climate change. It is proposed to include climate action within the new Plan, perhaps chapter 2. Objectives will pop up all through the Development Plan. It is hoped to keep the audit at the end of the Plan to ensure that that Plan has taken into account climate change.

Green infrastructure would also be more prominent within the Plan.

Cllr. L. Scott stated that climate change and biodiversity should work hand in hand.

### **Item 3: Climate Action – to receive an update on the following:**

#### **a. Implementation of the Climate Action Adaptation Strategy**

Ms. M. Cahill stated that she had completed a return yesterday to CARO which gave an update on the 85 actions in the Adaptation Strategy. Ms. Cahill agreed to circulate a copy of the return to the Members. The return looked at the actions and broke them down into who is responsible for their delivery. This is the first time that Wicklow has had to complete the return. The data is then collated at national level.

Ms Cahill confirmed that she had been working with CARO in order to draw up a national template form for reporting such items such as weather events.

Meetings will be held with the Municipal District in the next few weeks to look at the actions. It was felt that the Directorates need to start to deliver on actions that relate to them. The Climate Action Team would assist them in the delivery of the actions but it's up to each Section to deliver on the actions.

Cllr. D. O'Brien referred to the public awareness dimension and Comhairle na nOg. A strategy should be developed to provide a platform for the delivery of the work that is ongoing to ensure public awareness.

It was agreed to discuss the website under Any Other Business.

#### **b. Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Amendment Bill 2020**

This bill came in on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and changed the 2015 Bill.

Some of the key elements of the summary include:

Establishes 2050 emissions target – carbon budgets will be brought in. Total amount of green house emissions that is permitted within each centre. Council will propose budgets to the Government, there will be 3 at a time, 5 years each. The last of the five years will be provisions. It will be a rolling period.

Strengthens the role of the Climate Change Advisory Council. This is a panel of experts who advises the Government as to how to meet the 2050 targets.

Climate Action Plan – to be reviewed annually. Long term Action Strategies to be reviewed every ten years, Minister may seek for them to be reviewed every five years.

National and Sectoral Adaptation Plan and carbon budgets. Role of the Local Authority.

Climate Action Plan is a five year plan. From the commencement of the Bill, within 18 months, A Climate action Plan is to be produced within 12 months. Work must start on this immediately.

At the request of Ms. B. Kilkenny, it was agreed that Ms. Cahill's presentation would be circulated to the Members. Ms. Kilkenny confirmed that work had commenced already She welcomed Ms. Pam O'Reilly to the Climate Action Team who would make up the 4<sup>th</sup> Member of the Team which would be made up of Ms. Mary Cahill, Mr. Jim Callery, Ms. Deirdre Burns and now Ms. Pam O'Reilly.

Cllr. R O'Connor requested that the presentation be circulated to all the Councillors. The Councillors are presently drawing up the budget. It would be worthwhile if the Councillors could see the

resources needed to be put into the SPC. It would be appropriate for them to see it and should be defended when it comes down to budget.

Ms. L. Scott queried if there was any indication that additional central funding will be made available to Local Authorities to implement the plans.

Ms. Cahill stated that money had been announced nationally but nothing had been directly allocated to the Local Authority. There would be no finance to recruit an Energy and Emissions Manager due to the cut in LPT. A Mitigation Plan is called for in the Amendment Bill, yet Wicklow County Council does not have the resources to finance it.

Ms Kilkenny confirmed that the CCMA had submitted a Business Case to the Department seeking resources for the Local Authorities.

#### **c. EV Charging Points**

4 no. charge points were being installed at Shoreline Leisure Centre, Greystones. It was hoped that they would be installed before December. Suitable locations were presently being examined in Blessington. Public procurement may delay the process.

Cllr. P. Leonard queried if chargers could be installed at railway stations. Some of the stations in Cork and Kerry had e-bike chargers and stations. She requested that communication be made to see if the same could be done in Wicklow.

#### **d. Tree Management Policy for County Wicklow**

UCD had been appointed to carry out the Tree Management Policy for County Wicklow. Ms. Cahill confirmed that she and Ms. D. Burns had their first meeting with the Landscape Architect this week. The policy is at the initial stages of gathering data. It is hoped that a draft would be ready in 8 weeks time, however this may be delayed due to Covid. Following a query from the Chairman, Ms. Cahill confirmed that a presentation would be made to the Members once it is ready. It will be put on public display at draft stage.

It was agreed that Ms. Cahill would circulate a copy of the brief that issued to UCD to the Members of the SPC.

Cllr. P. Leonard queried if it would be possible, in the interim, to put in place a moratorium on tree felling. She referred to incidents in Arklow where mature trees had been felled. Ms. Cahill stated that resources were not available to do this. The current priority was to collect data for the Landscape Architect in UCD.

It was agreed that this matter could be discussed with the Municipal Districts at their forthcoming meeting with Climate Action Team.

#### **e. Funding options / grants available**

One of the functions that will be looked at in the coming weeks will be to compile a list of all EU, National and Local funding available to the Local Authority. Some of the funding available may only be 35% of the cost and matching funding would have to be sourced for the remainder. It was hoped that such a list would be circulated to the Members for their next meeting.

#### **f. Alternative to Glyphosate**

Ms. Cahill stated that a pilot study had been conducted by Dublin City in 2018 and Dun Laoghaire with regard to alternatives to using round up. A pharmaceutical company in Kerry also undertook a

study. All studies came up with one solution – Foam Steam. This used hot water and four different types of oil. The hot water seals the oil onto the leaves thereby killing the weed. There are no toxins and no health and safety issues. It can also be used as a disinfectant as it kills 99% virus and bacteria, including Covid 19. It could be used in playgrounds. Dun Laoghaire has purchased machines.

Ms. Cahill agreed to circulate details of the machine to the Members. The machine costs €22,000 with ongoing costs for the oil. One machine initially was being purchased for use by a Municipal District in County Wicklow.

#### **4. Biodiversity – to receive an update on Biodiversity Actions**

Ms Burns gave an update with regard to the Brittas Bay Biodiversity Project.

- **Management of grassland sward trial plots**
  - a. Liaise with WCC team to ensure bracken control and late season mowing is carried (July/Aug) and area is recorded
  - b. Annual monitoring of trial plot (vegetation cover and botanical quadrat survey)
  - c. Mark out grazing area boundary for clearance (autumn)
- **Biodiversity survey & monitoring**
  - a. Butterfly transect survey set up and exploratory survey visit
- **Invasive Non-native Species (INNS) management**
  - a. Liaise with WCC team to ensure method and approach to Sea Buckthorn removal is agreed and record area cleared (including GIS mapping)
- **Online presentation for community** - upcoming
- **NBDC Workshop:** Rare plant species workshop with NBDC on Sat 3<sup>rd</sup> October  
Rare Plant Monitoring Scheme for 4 key plants, each to ‘adopted’

1. Small Cudweed
2. Wild Asparagus
3. Meadow Saxifrage
4. Marsh Helleborine

#### **County Wicklow Swift Project**

Engaged a project co-ordinator to continue survey work and act as a point of contact for public events/ workshops .

Installation of nesting boxes on public buildings ; County Buildings, Arklow Library/MD offices and Depot, Dunlavin Courthouse, St. Particks Church Wicklow Town, Grangecon and Rathdrum

#### **Wildflower Meadow Video Tutorial**

Partnership with NBDC , Kilkenny and Kildare Co Co s. Video in production, Wicklow sites to be featured

**Awareness Raising:** -Ongoing throughout the year

Let's Get Buzzing event –( Feb)  
National Biodiversity Week (May)– Nature on your doorstep initiative  
National Heritage Week (Aug) – online presentations  
Gardening for Biodiversity Booklets  
Managed for Wildlife signs – pollinator resources, visits etc  
How to guide to make Birdboxes – with BWI  
Wicklows Garden Birds Poster – in production

### **Other projects**

**Wicklow Fish Barriers group:** WCC + East Wicklow Rivers Trust, Inland Fisheries Ireland and LAWPRO  
-a working group set up in 2020 to progress projects to remove obstacles to fish migration (based on a BAP action – audit carried out in 2014).

Currently working on two projects: Ballinglen Bridge near Tinahely and Three Trouts barrier ,  
Delgany

Ballinglen Bridge – substantial barrier identified, WCC getting engineering specification designed to allow project go out to tender. Also will facilitate AA screening and Heritage Appiasal.

Intention for EWRT to apply to the Salmon Conservation Fund for the works.

Glebe Barrier, Three Trouts Stream: Delgany Tidy Towns have €1500 allocated by LAWPRO for co-funding the mitigation of the Glebe fish barrier. IFI advising on works, Greystones MD to facilitate.

**Local Biodiversity Action Plans for Wicklow Towns and Villages:** A partnership project with CWP under the LEADER programme to engage ecological teams to work with towns and villages in county Wicklow to produce their own local biodiversity plan. Currently expressions of interest sought from suppliers. Intend to roll out project in Spring 2021.

### **Biodiversity Audit of Local Authority Properties/ land:**

Target Historic Graveyards in LA ownership in 2021 – high local biodiversity value and potential. Intend to draft conservation management prescriptions (phased basis, c. 50 sites).

## **5. Environmental Awareness – update on Environmental Awareness ongoing projects**

Mr. J. Callery gave an update on the tree grants. These were advertised last July with a closing date of the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020. 23 applications had been received for these grants. He is presently going through the applications with the Municipal District to ensure the sites are suitable. One or two of the sites may prove difficult, too close to roads or other utilities.

Fashion Competition - Initial closing date was October 2<sup>nd</sup> but the closing date was extended to the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020 for registration by students. Good interest in Wicklow with 25 teams registered. There has been fewer teams registered in other local authority areas.

Tidy towns estates environmental awards: the judging has been completed with a list of winners currently being compiled. Mr. Callery confirmed that he was presently working on the presentation of the awards this year.

During the summer months a food waste challenge in conjunction with Westmeath, Meath and Laois. Four videos had been produced with over 50,000 views in County Wicklow. 160,000 viewed the videos overall.

He referred to the Sustainable Goals and an interactive map which he had designed with Paddy O'Flaherty, IT. This map allowed communities to view different projects that have taken place around the County. Any community group in the county can put up an action that they have done. It can also be used to highlight the work being done by Wicklow County Council. Once the viewer clicks on an individual project, a description of the project, who is doing the project and a photograph of the project will be displayed. It shows what goals are happening in a particular location. There is a form available for interested parties to complete to be included on the map. It is very user friendly. The map was presented to the Management Team of the Council earlier in the week and it was hoped to present it to the full Council Meeting at their next meeting.

Cllr. L. Scott stated that the mapping tool should be used quite extensively.

SECs:

6 groups in County Wicklow.

Greystones / Delgany and Laragh sought extensions. A meeting took place in Greystones where a presentation was given. There is a lot of interest in the project.

Glenmalure – these are at the final review of Plan stage.

2 projects are getting started : Wicklow and Blessington.

Community Awards:

The application as being processed at the moment to see how they deal with climate action. This work is ongoing.

Cllr. P. Leonard requested that a press release be sent out to schools advising them of the mapping system. Schools are working on green initiatives and recycling which could be linked into the map.

#### **Item 6: Energy – to receive an update on energy efficiency and emissions**

Mr. M. Devereux confirmed that he did not have an update for the Members. Ms. Cahill confirmed that she had recently had a meeting with Mr. Joe Lane. It was hoped that an application for a BEC Scheme in 2021 would be made, however the grant available is only 35% and match funding would have to be found.

The Chairman requested an email issue to the Members with an update.

#### **Item 7: Any Other Business**

Ms. Cahill and Ms. O'Brien put forward a proposal that the Members would meet once a month and that every alternate meeting would be a progress meeting and the second meeting would be an SPC meeting where policy issues would be discussed. It was felt that so much was going on that is not being brought to the attention of the SPC Members. It was felt that the progress meeting would be an Informal meeting while the formal SPC meeting would have Minutes recorded.

Cllr. L. Scott welcomed the proposal. She queried whether minutes of both meetings would be taken or just the formal SPC meeting.

Ms. M. Cahill stated that the Minutes from the formal SPC would be taken and that they would be published. Ms. O'Brien stated that she envisaged the informal progress meetings where notes

would be taken. She agreed to discuss the matter with Ms. Lorraine Gallagher, Director of Services and Ms. B. Kilkenny.

Ms. O'Brien confirmed that every second meeting, being a formal SPC Meeting, would require a quorum.

Cllr. P. Leonard requested an update on the Mitigation for Avoca and coastal erosion.

Ms. Cahill confirmed that in relation to the submission for funding for the research project on the Avoca Catchment, that she had contacted Minister Harris' Office several time but had received no update from the Department. Ms. B. Kilkenny confirmed that she had sent an email to the Minister's Office outlining Ms. Cahill's emails and emphasising the importance of the project. It was agreed that a letter would be issued from the SPC to the Minister's Office in relation to same.

In relation to the coastal erosion study, Mr. M. Devereux stated that a study is being undertaken by Irish Rail, a draft of which has been submitted to the Council. Irish Rail will present the study to their own Board and it will be released and made available in due course.

Cllr. L. Scott requested that to ensure that there are no discrepancies in the Minutes, if possible, the Minutes of the Meeting could be issued to the Members within 7 to 10 days of the meeting.

In relation to the website, it was hoped that a full section would be created under the Living Section of the Wicklow.ie website. The website would include Jim's SDG map. It was agreed that a virtual workshop should be held to discuss the website in the first week of November.

The Chairman welcomed Ms. Pam O'Reilly to the Climate Action Team.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman

Date: \_\_\_\_\_