

**Minutes of the Climate Action, Biodiversity, Environment, Energy, Marine, Recreation and
Amenity Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on Friday 11th July, 2025 at 10 am in The Council
Chamber, County Buildings.**

PRESENT: Cllr. Erika Doyle (Cathaoirleach)
Cllr. Lourda Scott
Cllr. Peir Leonard
Cllr. Danny Alvey
Cllr. Dermot O'Brien
Cllr. Jason Mulhall
Justin Ivory (PPN Representative, East Wicklow, Env Seat)
Emma Smith (PPN Representative, West Wicklow, Env Seat)
Anthony Ardee (Business/Commercial Representative)

IN ATTENDANCE: Theresa O'Brien (Director of Services, CERA)
Mary Cahill (Senior Engineer, CERA)
Robert Kelly (Executive Scientist, CERA)
Declan Keogh (WCC MEEU, Regional Energy Manager)
Jim Callery (Climate Action Officer, CERA)
Sarah Rubalcava (Environmental Awareness Officer, CERA)
Joshua Saji George (Data Analyst, CERA)
Carmel Canterbury (Senior Staff Officer, Waste Management, CERA)
Margaret Keenan (LAWPRO)
Steve Davis (LAWPRO)
Basil Mannion (LAWPRO)
Nicole Keogh (Assistant Staff Officer, CERA)

APOLOGIES: Meadhbh Quinn (T/Senior Executive Officer, CERA)
Austin Baines (Community/Voluntary Representative)
Tom Byrne (Agricultural Representative)
Michael Storan (Development/Construction Representative)
Dr. Hannah O'Kelly (Biodiversity Officer, CERA)

1) Approval of the minutes from previous SPC Meetings

The minutes of previous meetings were proposed by Justin Ivory and seconded by Cllr. Jason Mulhall.

2) Approval of Draft Biodiversity Plan

Emma Smith congratulated Hannah on a very comprehensive, well thought out plan.

Cllr. O'Brien commented that when we resolve the youth voice on this committee, it might channel into a steering committee which will work alongside the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Cllr. Doyle agreed.

JI appreciated all the hard work that went in to create the BAP.

The Draft Biodiversity Plan was proposed by Cllr. O'Brien and seconded by Justin Ivory.

TO'B thanked HO'K and all the members on their contributions in the BAP workshop, held in the Glenview Hotel recently.

3) Review of Litter Management Plan : Chief Executives Report

Jim Callery delivered a brief presentation, which highlighted changes made from the public consultation piece, including changes that this SPC requested. Changes were reflected in document that was circulated prior to this meeting.

JI wished to clarify if green waste is enforceable offence under Litter Management Act or Waste Management Act. JC confirmed it was enforceable under both Acts.

Cllr. Scott noted it is an excellent plan, however one thing that may be lacking is the absence of stating the timeframe on some of the actions, i.e. cigarette butts issue. Cllr. Scott would like to see this item prioritised as it does account for over 46% of litter.

JC responded that conveying the messaging about issues such as cigarette litter and dog fouling will be repeated consistently and continuously and will be incorporated into the implementation of the plan's actions.

Cllr. Scott also queried the delivery of adequate waste bins, stated that trying to get a bin into litter black spots is hard and wondering if there is a way to match the supply to where the demand is and how it may be possible to marry the objectives with results.

Cllr. Leonard thanked JC for delivering a great plan and also for incorporating green waste into the plan. Cllr. Leonard queried whether there is a reuse option for items such as windows and furniture and if there is a creative way in which reuse options could be examined.

JC stated how the circular economy is a very important part to Waste Management, with some current initiatives focused on textiles and coffee cup reuse; however it was also noted that the local economy is going to have a key part to play in addressing waste.

Cllr. O'Brien commented that the Litter Management Plan is a brilliant piece of work. He noted that it is important to take under consideration that there needs to be a balance between individual responsibility and action from the Local Authority. Moreover, supporting innovation when it comes to Litter as a broader issue, is also key.

ES thanked JC for including uncovered trucks and quarry issues in the Litter Management Plan.

Cllr. Doyle highlighted her understanding that there is cost to each bin, i.e. installation, maintenance etc. She questioned whether there is a possibility for a public information piece, which highlights that some people's actions, make it worse for everyone and

wondered if financing was the predominant reason for the Municipal Districts not installing extra bins.

JC noted that the number of bins provided depends on the resources available to each Municipal District; however bins don't always solve the problem at hand. CCTV and enforcement resources may be other options available to address these issues.

Cllr. Leonard raised the issue that not every household has a bin and perhaps if there was a minimum amount of waste per household set, this would be easier to enforce.

JC replied that the waste segregation by laws are a piece of work that can be used in this instance, but it is resource dependent and also necessary to recognise that members of the public with additional needs will require more help.

Cllr. Mulhall mentioned that the option of installing big belly bins may work well. JC stated that the MD's have experienced varying success with Big Belly Bins. They seem to work better in areas of high litter. However, there has been an instance of a bin being removed due to a dog waste issue. JC highlighted the importance of enforcement, consistency on the provision of dog bins and implementing a more streamlined approach. JC established that through the life of plan, discussions will be held with each MD.

The Draft Litter Management Plan was proposed by Cllr. Scott and seconded by Cllr. Mulhall.

4) Presentation and review of Waste Bye-Laws

Robert Kelly delivered a comprehensive presentation of the information that was circulated to the members prior to this meeting.

He stated that the last bye laws of 2018 were in need of updating, hence the creation of this new revision. First change to note is that fines have increased from €25 to €75 for leaving bins kerbside outside of regulated times. Secondly, all members of the public are now entitled to have a brown bin.

A Waste Enforcement Officer has been appointed specifically for household food waste.

If approved today, the Bye- Laws will then go out for a period of public consultation and then to the full council meeting for approval.

Cllr. Alvey mentioned that at a past full Council Meeting, the matter of returning waste containers back to curtilage of properties to aid those with special needs was approved. However, the information circulated prior to today's meeting indicated that the Local Authority has no power post collection under the legislation. Can RK offer any advice in this regard?

RK replied that the bye-laws are bottom of ladder on the legislation hierarchy. Bye-laws are prior to legislation and only the National Waste Collection Permit Office (NWCPO) based in Offaly County Council can deal with appeals or issues. Further to every Waste Collector needing a valid waste permit, there would also be need for collaboration of numerous Councils to bring it to NWCPO. This issue will be raised at regional level at the next meeting.

Cllr. Leonard highlighted her concern with the new legislation where it states that there has to be 3 bins for each household, and as this includes apartments, how is the issue of excess bins to be dealt with when people move out.

RK responded that this is a real concern and a problem in apartment complexes particularly. He noted that this was dealt with successfully in Greystones by talking to the Management Company, i.e. organising a communal bin.

Cllr. Leonard asked whether there is any way of strengthening bye-laws regarding unauthorised waste collectors.

RK agreed this is a prevalent problem, and the Local Authority can use both the Litter Management and Waste Management Act to enforce it but it involves a heavy workload. It was highlighted that Wicklow County Council came joint 7th in the country for environmental inspections as part of the National Environmental Inspections report published by the EPA, which is an excellent result but the high workload involved will continue regardless.

Cllr. Leonard queried if communal bins could be incorporated as a condition in planning applications. RK replied that it seems to be incorporated into new applications but will examine this possibility in existing areas.

Cllr. O'Brien agreed that the increase in fines will be advantageous and could cause a shift in attitude. RK concurred, as the success rate in collecting fines currently is quite poor so the increase will be advantageous.

Anthony Ardee asked whether it needed to be acknowledged in bye-laws that brown bins are not necessarily needed in rural areas.

RK emphasised that it is responsibility of individual householder to refuse the brown bin if they have an alternative option available to them.

Cllr. Doyle pointed out that the bye- laws seem to be for consumer and not collector. RK confirmed that is correct, as operators need Waste Collection Permit to operate and they are not managed under the Bye Laws.

RK explained that the Bye – Laws will be advertised next and then go out to a period of public consultation.

5) Presentation on WCC Decarbonisation

Declan Keogh provided comprehensive presentation on the decarbonisation of WCC.

Cllr. Doyle noted that the presentation was very interesting.

ES queried whether the proposed Data Centre in Arklow has been examined as a district heating option.

DK confirmed that CODEMA have met with Echelon to examine waste heat but also looking at other options including biomass and geothermal. ES responded that as the distance between town centres and the proposed data centre could be prohibitive in terms of cost, examining other options, i.e. green houses in close proximity, could be good alternative. DK agreed and is examining all different scenarios.

Cllr. O'Brien commended the long term aspect of these plans and the multi-party collaboration aspect. He asked whether there is any involvement from Wicklow based companies.

DK stated that CODEMA are the appointed energy consultants, and that the value of contracts in the main may not lie within the scope of most local small and medium sized enterprises (SME). However, there is the possibility of introducing 'meet the buyer' events, where these enterprises may be able to act in the capacity of a sub-contractor.

Cllr. Scott asked for further information on the sustainable aviation fuel project in Denmark as mentioned in the presentation. DK advised that the Danish government are pushing the project, that they have had district heating for long time and are very advanced in this field. They are using Waste Carbon dioxide to create Green Methanol. DK will circulate information to the members after the meeting.

Cllr. Mulhall questioned if Wicklow County Council have met with Wicklow County Partnership about their 'smart village' projects and cited examples in Finland. DK will mention this to CODEMA as it may contribute to their feasibility study.

MCahill wanted to make the members aware of the 1927 Act, which made the ESB the only authority designated to supply energy nationally, so if WCC had excess energy it was not possible to share it with Coral Leisure. DK stated there is 'private wire' stipulation, where a power line cannot cross the public road, however he was unsure of this stipulations' current status.

6) LAWPRO Presentation

Margaret Keenan, Steve Davis and Basil Mannion attended the SPC as guest speakers on behalf of the Local Authorities Water Programme (LAWPRO).

MK shared a comprehensive presentation on the work of LAWPRO, including but not limited to items such as the ecological status of water quality in Wicklow, pressures impacting waterbodies, the 16 Wicklow areas for action, the Local Authority Water Action Plan, Nature Based Solutions, Farming for Water EIP and the Community Water Development Fund.

Cllr. Alvey thanked MK for the presentation and questioned what remit do LAWPRO have to hold Coillte to account and how do LAWPRO and Coillte overlap?

MK advised that LAWPRO do not have any enforcement function but can carry out assessments and escalate to the Forestry Services if necessary, as they do have enforcement powers.

Cllr. Leonard stated that Úisce Eireann has left part of Arklow Town out of treatments works and would LAWPRO be able to examine this.

MK replied that Arklow Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) will be assessed and reported to EPA if further investigation is merited.

In response to a query from Cllr. Leonard, SD noted that Avoca Mines and Avoca River Catchment will be examined by LAWPRO next year at sub tributary scale. BM added that before any works commence on the ground there will be community information sessions held.

Regarding Avoca Mines, MCahill reported that there is an ongoing discussion with the Department at the moment and there could be large remediation plan in the pipeline. This project would encompass a lot of different sectors, including heritage, water quality and Shelton Abbey Tailings Facility.

Cllr. Scott asked what can community citizen scientists contribute to the work of LAWPRO as there are lots of active people in the Greystones area that are willing to help. MK advised that as JJ is the community representative for LAWPRO, he would be the point of contact to discuss this. Also, as aforementioned, community information sessions will be held in catchment areas before works commence, where people could also offer valuable input.

ES wanted to clarify from the presentation, which river was being examined in the west of the county and also offered services of WWEN Citizen Scientists.

ES also noted from the presentation that there are 4500 farm inspections and asked how they are welcomed by the farming community.

ES was informed that a new farm inspector only commenced in their role last month, but action plans would be put in place with each farmer, creating a collaborative approach to work with the farmers to achieve their objectives. LAWPRO's role involves identifying areas to examine and they work with the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP) to agree corrective actions with the farmers. The Local Authority on the other hand carry out more of an enforcement role following inspections.

Cllr. O'Brien queried whether LAWPRO observe the importance of the youth sector in these works or plans. MK confirmed they did and suggested that they can offer support to the youth sector through different initiatives but also perhaps the development of an education strategy, which could be put in place in the future. BM added that they are always keen to add collaboration with youth sector.

Mary Cahill asked that as the Water Action Plan is non-statutory and it will therefore not be going for public consultation, what the expected timeline for completion is.

MK responded that a meeting will take place in September where the draft plan will be discussed, with a view to having the full plan approved before the end of 2025. It will also tie into RMCEI planning for next year so the intention is not to have duplication of effort. LAWPRO would also like to include BAP and CAP actions that link to water.

7) Any Other Business

Cllr. Alvey was approached by a business who deals with air quality, carbon emissions and sensors and they have already rolled out a pilot project with Dublin City Council yet they have not heard back from WCC. He suggested that there may be an opportunity to work with them. MCahill replied that she will look into this and Cllr Alvey will forward the relevant information.

Cllr. Leonard queried whether AOB is going to be included on the agenda going forward.

Cllr. Doyle stated that if the AOB item will require feedback at the next meeting, then it would be preferred to send the AOB item well in advance of the next meeting.

Cllr. Leonard would like to follow up on the Strategic Maritime Review in the future and would like to develop a policy, protocol and review committee around harbours through this SPC.

MCahill informed the members that works are ongoing on a tender to get a consultant on the Maritime Strategy, which would examine the best use of space.

Cllr. Leonard reiterated the issue about Uisce Eireann leaving a part of Arklow town out of WWTP and what can be done about it. MCahill confirmed that it is solely a matter for Uisce Eireann, Environment do not have any budgets or remit in that area. Environment did bring the fault to the attention of Uisce Eireann.

The next meeting is scheduled for the 12th September 2025.

This concluded the business of the meeting.