

**MINUTES OF THE CLIMATE ACTION & BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 9<sup>th</sup> OF DECEMBER 2021 AT 3.00PM BY ZOOM**

**PRESENT:** Cllr. Rory O'Connor (Chairperson)  
Cllr. Lourda Scott  
Cllr. Peir Leonard  
Cllr. Dermot O'Brien  
Cllr. Jodie Neary  
Ms. Sharon Jackson  
Mr. Justin Ivory

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Ms. Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services  
Ms. Mary Cahill, Senior Executive Engineer  
Ms. Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer  
Mr. Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer  
Mr. Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer

**APOLOGIES:** Ms. Jackie Carroll, Senior Executive Officer

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Ms. Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services, thanked the Cathaoirleach for his work and for chairing the meetings during his two year term and said that she looks forward to working with Cllr L Scott, as Cathaoirleach. She also advised that Government has indicated funding of €600,000 for 10 biodiversity officers will be put in place. Finer details are yet to be finalised but Ms. Kilkenny assured that we will get an officer even in terms of a shared service.

Further thanks and acknowledgement of Cllr Rory O'Connor's work on the Committee followed.

**Item 1: Minutes of Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2021**

The Minutes of the Climate Action and Biodiversity Strategic Policy Committee held on the 22nd of October 2021 were proposed by Cllr. Pier Leonard, seconded by Cllr. Jodie Neary and agreed.

**Item 2: Matters Arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

**Item 6: Coastal Protection**

The item was brought further up the agenda for discussion.

The Committee was informed that a Strategic Assessment Report by Irish Rail has been accepted by the Department. The project refers to the soft coastline from Ringsend to Wicklow and will be carried out as a single project. A steering committee will be set up and WCC will be represented as a stakeholder. Mr. Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer, later confirmed that there is an assumption that they have asked for him to be on the committee.

MD advised that whilst Irish Rail are concerned about the Murrough, Brittas Bay and South of Arklow are also vulnerable and he will contact the OPW in the New Year to get a group up and running to manage this part of the coastline. MD will enquire about funding from the OPW which will also

assist with biodiversity in the area. He also confirmed that Irish Water is at construction stage with rock armour on the first 650m outside the pier in Arklow. Coastal protection north of Arklow will be a €5m - €10m project to bring the rock armour up to standard and will be looking for funding as a pilot type project. He is also looking at natural methods i.e. reinstating habitat with oysters being considered.

Following a question from Cllr. O'Connor in relation to timing of funding, MD advised we should hear in February/March but cannot confirm if the project would be funded completely.

Cllr. P. Leonard stated that replacing rock armour is not working and suggested considering incorporating structures such as e-cement on which to grow kelp creating a habitat for marine life. She also suggested detached structures and MD to bring these suggestions to Irish Rail. MD said that the first question as part of the feasibility study will be if we can install a detached or secondary breakwater with similar effects to natural reefs. Timeline for submission of application is Q1 2022.

Ms. B. Kilkenny gave her apologies and left the meeting.

### **Item 3: Tree Management Policy**

Changes to the Tree Management Policy were outlined by Mr. Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer, and he advised that some of the issues raised related more to other areas of Council i.e. Planning. It was advised that not all complaints can be met in the Tree Management Policy.

Cllr P Leonard commented that there is a lot in the Policy which we can work on and it is necessary to constantly push for infrastructure and resources for Climate and Biodiversity.

It was noted by Cllr L Scott that there is a role for PPN representatives who have an important role particularly in the Planning SPC to bring up biodiversity issues.

Ms. Sharon Jackson requested that a separate study and survey takes place in relation to hedgerows and for increased publicity through WCC website, press releases and publications such as Countywide, as with increased education people may realise that felling is not permitted. JC agreed that with Ms. Jackson that information is key and the website is the place to do that.

It was advised by Ms. Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer, that we would not have done justice to hedgerows if it was cobbled into the Tree Policy and an enquiry was made as to the Hedgerow Policies in other Local Authorities and the sharing of information between neighbouring counties. Ms. M Cahill, Senior Executive Engineer, confirmed that this is the case and discussions about regional projects and ideas take place at CARO meetings every two to three months. She advised that as we do not have a Parks Department it is not feasible to put in similar goals to those of the Dublin Councils.

It was agreed to adopt the Policy with Ms. S Jackson asking for it to be reviewed within two years. MC agreed saying that we will have feedback in place by then too.

The Cathaoirleach confirmed that the Tree Management Policy is approved.

Mr. M Devereux gave his apologies and left the meeting.

**Item 4: Update on Climate Adaptation Strategy Actions**

MC advised on progress on the 85 actions signed up to through the Climate Action strategy. There were no service indicators to report on as we do not as yet have any and we have no new or postponed. While some of the reporting can be confusing our Return in October 2020 showed out of the 85 actions we had 31% not started but this figure is now down to 17%. Some of these are out of our control and some we do not have the resources for. 82% of the 85 actions are in place or are being considered by other sections. Our goal for 2022 is to look at those not started and she will circulate an excel spreadsheet relating to same. It was agreed that this is a good idea and members can note their ideas.

**Item 5: Update on Co. Wicklow Heritage Plan and Biodiversity Actions**

Ms. D Burns gave an excellent presentation on the Heritage & Biodiversity Action Plan 2021.

Content included details of various funds and an overview of various projects such as Glendalough Community Archaeology Project, Swift Champions initiative, Kilbride Mausoleum and Graveyard Conservation Plan and interpretive signage at Brittas Bay. Other topics covered included Our Wicklow heritage events and BAP actions funded by WCC and NPWS. Ms. Burns also commented on the pollinator plan and the Wicklow Community Monument Fund – Year 2.

In response to a question Ms. Burns advised that maps and reports for pollinators can be viewed on [pollinators.ie](http://pollinators.ie) and any group such as Tidy Towns or local authorities.

In response to a question on a Notice of Motion for 100 acres of marsh in Arklow, DB advised that with regard to LA owned land a Conservation Management Plan needs to be prepared. She advised that there is information available now to turn the marsh into a conservation plan with funding also available.

**Item 6: Any Other Business**

Cllr. P Leonard enquired as to the possibility of working with Coillte instead of buying trees, growing them to a certain stage. Mr. J Ivory advised that there is a Council funded project in place where people are taught what seeds to collect and replant in a sustainable way. Mr. Callery confirmed that 25 people have been trained to date.

In response to a question about funding of a Biodiversity Officer, Ms. Burns advised that extra funding is now available.

The Cathaoirleach said it was a great honour to serve on the Committee and that concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
CHAIRMAN

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