

**MINUTE OF THE CLIMATE ACTION & BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> OF SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 2.30PM BY ZOOM**

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

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

**Item 1: Minutes of Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2021**

The Minutes of the Climate Action and Biodiversity Strategic Policy Committee held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 were proposed by Cllr. P. Leonard, seconded by Cllr. L. Scott and agreed.

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

There were no matters arising from the Minutes

**Item 3: Circulars and Correspondence**

SI no. 381/2021 – European Communities (Clean and Energy Efficient Road Transport Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations 2021

The members were advised on the Clean and Energy Efficient Road Transport Vehicles regulations, of which the primary aim is to promote the uptake of low and zero-emission vehicles by setting binding minimum targets for the share of 'clean' (low- and zero-emission) vehicles in procurements undertaken by public sector bodies and consequently stimulating the alternatively-fuelled vehicle market. It was noted that Wicklow County Council is piloting green vehicles and is working towards a plan for replacement of suitable vehicles in each of the MDs.

**Climate Action Plan 2021**

It was noted that the Climate Action Plan is due to be published and the Council awaits update from the Department on the timelines for local authorities' plans.

Funding for these initiatives has been requested sectorally and it is anticipated that further clarification will be available before the end of the year.

It is anticipated that Climate Action posts will be approved for 2022 which will be a welcome additional resource.

#### **Item 4: Presentation on Just Transition from Ms. Sinead Mercier**

The members received a comprehensive presentation on the topic of Just Transition from Ms. Sinead Mercier, lecturer on environmental and sustainability/social justice in Maynooth University.

Many points of interest were raised around the topic of inclusiveness of minority and vulnerable citizens and the effect adapting will have on them whilst stressing the importance of recognising these groups as part of the Social Justice aspect of Just Transition.

Ms. Mercier advised that Wicklow is not in the Midlands region and encouraged the County to be one of the next areas for Just Transition.

Ms. Mercier advised that whilst the EPA and the Government look at a national picture it is most important that Local Authorities look at the specific and localised needs of their own citizens and if individuals can cope with Climate Action when it happens. The speaker suggested there may be a way to develop and define Just Transition into the Local Climate Action Plan and the County Development Plan and suggested that in order to achieve social justice at L.A. level indicators could be developed, possibly through a points framework.

Cllr. Dermot O'Brien took over the Chair and a discussion ensued.

It was noted that the Farming Community will be key if targets are to be met as traditional practices can only change with proper supports in place highlighting the area of jobs.

Ms. Mercier advised that she would recommend analysis of who is vulnerable in the area, e.g. the farming community, coping with droughts and deluges in winters. Additional analysis is needed on who is most at risk and the consequences of wildfire and erosion. Information should be gathered in relation to social issues including locations of halting sites, social housing, the needs of the elderly and energy poverty. On easing restrictions on farmers and encouraging diversification Ms. Mercier recommended requesting more resources and creating a workforce that rely on climate action similar to other interest groups. L.A.s should hire extra manpower and mainstream the topic alongside business.

The effects of climate anxiety on young people who are acutely aware that they cannot leave the climate emergency was discussed and also the challenges for the next generation.

In summary, Ms. S. Mercier commented that there is a problem with siloed thinking and not assessing issues adequately. She recommends moving forward in the area of poverty proofing, waste heat – data centres and free heat, assessing mining consultation and how it will impact on farming which can be beneficial from biodiversity view point. Just Transition asks to focus on public good and public value.

#### **5. Presentation on EV Charging Infrastructure by Ms. B. Kilkenny**

The members received a presentation from Ms. Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services and Chair of the EV Charging Working Group within the CCMA (County Council Managers Association). The Group has provided a guidance document entitled 'Local Authority - Electrification of Fleet and EV Charging Guidance Document' full details of which can be found at [www.lgma.ie](http://www.lgma.ie).

The four main areas of the document are:

- 1) Role of L.A.s in Electrifying their Fleets and installing EV Charge Points
- 2) General Guidance and Understanding the Basics
- 3) LA Fleet Electrification
- 4) Public Charging Infrastructure

The main recommendation of the Guidance Document is to devise a strategy for each L.A. division.

Topics covered by Ms. Kilkenny included on-street charging and the network capacity and she advised that the role of the L.A. will graduate in the long term. It was also advised that charging hubs should be located on outskirts of urban areas in the ongoing bid to keep town centres free of traffic and Just Transition will have to ensure supports are in place to enable people to travel into town centres.

A short discussion followed around charging of EV's in relation to length of time necessary and the differences between domestic charge points, Council charge points and the fast points located at locations such as Applegreen garages.

It was noted that there was scope for charge points in shopping centre car parks and that an opportunity exists for economic capitalisation in areas such as end of life for EV batteries and repairs to electric bikes etc.

Cllr. Lourda Scott returned to the Chair.

Charging points will be installed first in Council depots and then vehicles will follow. Each L.A. must come up with its own guidelines and targets.

It was welcomed that the Environmental Wardens and Municipal Districts are currently trialling electric vans.

It was agreed that without proper infrastructure people will not purchase EV's particularly in the case of commercial vehicles and hence it is up to L.A.'s to kick start the process.

#### **Item 6: Tree Management Policy Update:**

The draft Tree Management Policy was presented to the members who were advised that a critical review of the Council's current Tree management procedures and protocols had been undertaken which was used to inform the drafting of the draft policy.

It was noted that the draft policy provided by the consultant contained objectives which are outside the remit of the Council. The Council agreed to forward the full draft document to the members after the meeting.

Following a comprehensive discussion and in recognising the multitude of issues raised by the members, it was agreed that submissions would be accepted from the Members and following assessment of same, a further meeting would be held to discuss and advance the policy.

Regarding public consultation, it was again reiterated that public consultation is not required in this instance.

**Item 7: Climate Action Website:**

The members welcomed the reformatting of the Climate Action information on the website, and the excellent quality of the additional content.

**Item 8: Any Other Business:**

A Consultant is being appointed to undertake the Implementation Plan for the Arklow Decarbonization Zone. An initial meeting will be followed by a public meeting with all stakeholders in attendance.

Following query on possibility of allotments in Blessington, it was agreed that Community Allotments would be discussed at a further meeting.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

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

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