

**MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF THE CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY ACTION  
STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021 AT  
3.00 P.M. BY MICROSOFT TEAMS**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE** Ms. Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services  
Ms. Theresa O'Brien, Senior Executive Officer  
Ms. Mary Cahill, Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. James Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer  
Ms. Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer  
Mr. Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer

**Item 1: Minutes of the Meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2020.**

It was proposed by Cllr. P. Leonard, seconded by Cllr. L. Scott and agreed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2020, be signed.

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

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

**Item 3: Presentation re National Dialogue on Climate Action**

Mr. J. Callery confirmed that the PPN had only received word the afternoon previously that they were one of the PPNs selected to take part in a National Dialogue on Climate Action. Part of the commitment of the Climate Action Plan 2021 is a commitment to have more consultation. Several consultation themes were identified for discussion.

Ms. A. Vaucanson stated that Wicklow PPN would hold a webinar on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 where Helen Lawless would be the moderator for the online event. Before the event Helen would have to undergo training. After the training various members of the PPN will be invited to the online event – there is a maximum attendance of 20 representatives. A report would be made available after the event.

The Chairman stated that he was delighted to see a youth voice.

Cllr. D. O'Brien stated that Comhairle na Nog had not been formally notified of a concrete role but he stated that the Organisation would be very interested in developing a role. Comhairle has the structure and the contacts through the schools and youth projects.

**Item 4: Update on Eastern & Midlands Climate Action Regional Office (CARO)**

Ms. M. Cahill went through the presentation which Mr. A. Dunney gave to the full Members of Wicklow County Council on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 in advance of training being rolled out to Senior Management and Elected Representatives on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

The role of CARO was to co-ordinate and facilitate climate action at local and regional level, develop regional specialisms and links with third levels and promote local innovation and community capacity building.

Wicklow is in the Eastern Region Office of CARO along with Kildare, Louth and Meath.

Their work programme for 2021 covered six pillars:

- Management & Governance
- Adaptation
- Mitigation
- Communication & Citizen Engagement
- Training & Education
- Knowledge Development.

One of the issues that CARO would provide guidance to the Team would be on was decarbonisation zones.

It was agreed that Ms. M. Cahill would issue an email to the Members following her and Ms. B. Kilkenny's workshop with the Department and SEAI which was taking place the following day on decarbonisation zones.

Cllr. P. Leonard stated that she had had a meeting yesterday regarding Native Oyster Restoration Ireland who had got grant aid from Leader to start a project. They were looking at creating Kelp forests along the east coast. Cllr. Leonard felt that the sea, marine and the east coast would be a fantastic opportunity for carbon sequestration in consultation with Irish Rail and their proposed conservation works. She proposed that NORI would be invited in to make a presentation to the Members of the SPC.

Ms. B. Kilkenny stated that an application for funding for coastal protection works for the South of Arklow would be made once funding is announced.

**Item 5: Climate Action – to receive an update on the following:**

**Implementation of the Climate Action Adaptation Strategy**

Ms. Cahill confirmed that a guidance document would be made available from CARO shortly for all Local Authorities. All Directorates were given a list of their actions from the Adaptation Strategy.

**EV Charging Points**

The chargers to be installed in Greystones had been delayed due to software issues, card reader issues, Brexit and Covid. It is hoped that they will be delivered on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Initially the card reader may not work so there will be no charge for using the point. Signage to this effect will be displayed.

Ms. Cahill and Ms. Kilkenny are on an EV Working Group, which Ms Kilkenny Chairs. This group will meet again on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> Feb. A guidance document was being produced for all local authorities in relation to EV chargers.

Ms. Cahill stated that she had been in contact with each of the Municipal Districts and has asked them to identify three vans in each district that could be transitioned. EV charging points are to be installed in one depot per MD and negotiations are continuing with the Unions in relation to placing points in the workers' home.

Cllr. P. Leonard stated that Eir were rolling out old telephone boxes with EV charging points. Tesco and Lidl in Arklow were on the outskirts and would be an ideal place for charging points, thereby getting people to walk into the Main Street.

Cllr. L. Scott queried if it was the intention of the Team to publish the progress that has been made thus far with the Climate Adaptation Strategy. Ms. Cahill stated that the return that was made last September had been made available to the Members of the SPC but it was not published, either by Wicklow County Council or nationally. Ms. Kilkenny stated that work was happening on the production of a spreadsheet summarising each of the categories and whether they were mitigation or adaptation or a mixture of both.

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

A meeting was arranged with Ms. S. Meers, UCD Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> Feb. The production of a draft policy was delayed due to Ms. Meers being ill.

Cllr. L. Scott queried when the draft of the policy will be circulated to the Members. Ms. Cahill confirmed that the Team would need to ensure that it is specific to the management of trees under the control of Wicklow County Council. On the suggestion of Cllr. R. O'Connor, it was agreed that a presentation would be made by Ms. Meers at the next meeting if matters had progressed sufficiently.

Cllr. P. Leonard suggested contacting Blue Sky Mapping who produce digital terrain models. It may be a very expensive method of surveying trees and woodland but should be investigated. She agreed to send a link of the Company to the Team.

### **Funding Options / Grants Available**

Applications for grant aid under the Climate Action Fund had not opened yet.

### **Alternatives to Glyphosate**

Ms. Cahill confirmed that she had met with the Municipal Districts two weeks ago and a policy was being put in place that the use of glyphosates would be banned unless the Municipal Districts complete a form to state why they were using it, when, who and where they would be using it. This information would be collated by Ms. P. O'Reilly and would provide a baseline of what's being used in the County and to measure reduction in the use of glyphosate.

Ms. Cahill stated that the Foamstream Machine had been purchased and delivered to the Bray Depot. No training had been given to the staff due to Covid. An EV flat bed truck was going to be bought in order to transport the machine around the County and prices were being sought in this regard. It was intended that it would move down the East Coast initially.

### **Woodland Creation Scheme**

Ms. Cahill confirmed that she had been in contact with Ms. F. McHugh, Area Advisor in Teagasc and had forwarded her details in relation to 3 possible sites – one on Bray Head, one on Wicklow Head and a site in Grangecon. The site at San Souci was not registered to Wicklow County Council and therefore couldn't be included in the Scheme. Ms. McHugh was to carry out a desk top exercise of the sites and revert to Ms. Cahill. Unfortunately, due to Covid, she couldn't visit the sites.

A list of sites had been received from the Law Department and Ms. Cahill confirmed that she is going to try and progress the registration of suitable sites with the Law Department in order to get them registered.

### **Item 6 Update on Biodiversity**

Ms. D. Burns highlighted some of the pieces that she was working on

1. Nature is good for you campaign in conjunction with Healthy Ireland. Booklets had been produced together with an advertisement campaign on East Coast Radio. A Spring Into Nature talk had been held which was well attended. Another event planned for the following week is booked out. There are more planned in March. Advertisement takes place through the libraries. Ms. Burns confirmed that it was her intention to keep the talks happening during the year.
2. Biodiversity Action Plan Fund – this fund hasn't opened yet.
3. Continuing with the Brittas Bay Project
4. Continuing the Swift Project
5. Genealogy Project – a book auditing the County Wicklow Genealogical Sites will be produced.
6. Protected Structure grants and built heritage grants. Members of the public can apply to carry out conservation works on their buildings. €70,000 is available through the BHIS Scheme. €90,000 was received under the HSF in 2020 and it is hoped that a similar amount would be received in 2021.
7. Application has been made for one project under the Community Monument Fund – Medieval Arklow.

Cllr. P. Leonard queried the status of the Biodiversity Action Plan which was 2010- 2015 and queried if it was out of date. Ms. Burns confirmed that the Plan is 2010 – 2015. However the Plan was incorporated into the Heritage Plan which is 2017 – 2022 which includes biodiversity actions. Going forward she would like to see the County Wicklow Heritage and Biodiversity Plan introduced.

On the suggestion of Cllr. P. Leonard it was agreed that something would be placed on the website advising members of the public of same.

Ms. Burns confirmed that grants under the BHIS Scheme ranges from €1,000 to €15,000. Wicklow County Council grant aided 60% of 2020 applications.

In relation to a query from Cllr. P. Leonard regarding the ownership of certain land that could be suitable for Woodland Creation Scheme, Ms. M. Cahill confirmed that when work started looking for sites for the Scheme, contact was made with the Law Department in relation to land that had been acquired as part of CPOs for motorways. The Law Department produced a very extensive list. Ms. Cahill confirmed that it was her intention to look at a number of

individual sites and to liaise with the Law Departments in order for the registration to be progressed.

Cllr. J. Neary queried if the Council would be advertising the ban on hedgecutting that would be coming up shortly. Ms. Burns confirmed that the Roads Department usually do but that she would take the matter up with the Roads Department.

Cllr. L. Scott stated that she had been at the talk on Tuesday night and that it was very enjoyable. She stated that there is a great appetite for knowledge. She queried if the County Wicklow Heritage Plan was due for renewal in 2021 and queried if there was enough representation on the different committees in the County Council such as the Outdoor Recreation Committee and the overall plan for Glendalough.

Ms. Burns confirmed the Heritage Plan was 2017 to 2022. In relation to the overall plan for Glendalough Ms. Burns confirmed that she was on the Task Force while herself and Ms. Cahill were on the Outdoor Recreation Committee. Ms. Cahill stated that one of her priorities is to ensure that the Climate Action Team has sufficient input into all plans and strategies.

Ms. Kilkenny stated that training will be rolled out to all staff. Ms. Cahill had met with the Municipal Districts and each of them are keen to incorporate climate action into their processes and procedures.

#### **Item 7 Environmental Awareness – update on Environmental Awareness ongoing projects.**

Mr. J. Callery gave an update in relation to the projects that he was working on.

1. Relove Project – the final of this project has been set for the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Videos are being released of the finalists. There are two finalists from County Wicklow, both being from St. Mary's College, Arklow.
2. Food Waste – seven videos were produced over Christmas with over 65,000 views. 41,000 of these were greater than 3 seconds. Work will continue on this with the production of future videos.
3. Trees: National Tree Week is in March. Mr. Callery confirmed that he has requested trees and as soon as he receives confirmation on the number of trees, he will be in contact with Community Groups, Schools, etc. 21 tree grants were awarded.
4. Environmental Awareness: An inschool competition was held this year with a prize for each participating school of a voucher for Dublin Zoo.
5. TY Programme: Mr. Callery is working with Kildare and Meath County Council together with CARO to advance a TY Programme. Work is being progressed on specific themes from food waste to energy. There are 11 themes in total. It is hoped that same will be rolled out in the next academic year.
6. Tidy Towns Environmental Awards: the winners have been announced. Climate Action Award went to Arklow Tidy Towns, the Energy Award to Laragh SEC while the Biodiversity Award went to Greystones Tidy Towns.
7. Sustainability in Wicklow Tourism: Mr. Callery stated that he was working with Wicklow Tourism to hold a webinar in March with more webinars planned on themes such as energy, green procurement and food waste. Emphasis would be placed on businesses telling their stories – what they have done to sustain their business on the Wicklow Tourism website.

8. He had developed proposed categories for the website page. These included
  - Biodiversity & Nature Based Solutions
  - Energy Management
  - Climate Action Policy
  - Climate & Biodiversity Action SPC
  - Sustainable Transport
  - Citizen Engagement
  - Sustainable Development Goals
  - Resource Management
9. SECs: Glenmalure have completed their Energy Master Plan and looking to identify projects to progress. Laragh / Glendalough are finishing their Plan, while work on the Newtownmountkennedy, Greystones, Wicklow and Blessington continues.

Cllr. P. Leonard queried if a tree planting calculator could be put on the website to inform members of the public how many trees have been planted across the County. A yearly / five year target could be set. She also suggested that links to other Organisations such as Bird Watch Ireland should be included on the website.

Mr. Callery stated that he would look into the planting calculator and that links would be built into the website together with the Climate Action Team's contact details.

Cllr. D. O'Brien stated that if participation from Comhairle was needed, the Organisation met approximately once a week and he could organise for Mr. J. Callery to attend one. Mr. Callery stated that he would be in touch with Cllr O'Brien in relation to the TY Programme.

Cllr. L. Scott stated that the website will be a great resource once up and running and queried if energy emissions / climate adaptation progress would be highlighted.

Cllr. P. Leonard suggested contacting the local artists for photographs for inclusion on the website.

**Item 8: Energy – to receive an update on energy efficiency and emissions**

Ms. Cahill confirmed that the BEC application had gone through the first stage with the SEAI. 33% funding was available. There are specific projects in nine locations throughout the County. The SEAI had removed some of the works proposed, some windows and doors had been removed. The paperwork was presently being finalised and the match funding would have to be found before the paperwork was forwarded back to the SEAI. A final stage of approval is needed from the SEAI. Details of the applications would be circulated to the Members once final approval had been received. There is one application in each Municipal District.

Significant match funding would have to be found in the order of €400,000 to get these important projects up and running. Some of the projects included solar PV panels on the Blessington Depot, works to Wicklow Town Hall, Clermont, Coral Leisure Centre, Wicklow. EV charging points were also proposed in the six depots together with one in Wicklow County Council offices.

An Energy Team had been set up in the County Council and they would hold their first meeting tomorrow, 12<sup>th</sup> Feb, to discuss the project and advance the application.

In relation to the solar car park, Ms. Cahill confirmed that she would check this with the Housing Section and would circulate a start date. A summary of the project had been received for inclusion on the website and this will be circulated.

LED Lights:

Cllr. L. Scott queried the timeline in relation to the National Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project. It was confirmed that tender documentation preparation is underway for the eastern region and it was envisaged that works would commence in early 2022.

In response to a query from Cllr. Scott as to whether there was a policy in Wicklow County Council in relation to LED lights and turning them off at specific times, Ms. Cahill confirmed that there wasn't one at present. Ms. Cahill stated that in relation to the Three Trouts Stream she had been in discussion with the Municipal District Engineer about getting the balance right with regard to lighting on the walkway / cycleway taking biodiversity into account.

Cllr. P. Leonard stated that sensor lights were in Arklow which came on if people walked through the area.

It was agreed to put this item on the Agenda for the next meeting.

**Item 9: Notice of Motion in the names of Councillor Dermot O'Brien and Councillor Grace McManus (22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2020).**

*"That Wicklow County Council endorse the recently launched Youth Manifesto on Climate Justice. As the first Council to declare a climate and biodiversity crisis and the first Council to include a young person on an SPC we join such eminent figures as Chair of the Elders and former President Mary Robinson in the endorsement of this important Manifesto which calls for Climate Justice through:*

*Unity*

*Pointing fingers at each other will not solved the climate crisis. Whether we are young or old, rich or poor, from urban or rural areas, climate change will impact us all.*

*Standing in unity while recognising our different realities is how we must tackle this challenge.*

*A Green Check*

*How society functions in any given democracy is dictated by the priorities of its government. Make climate change our priority. Deliver radical, people centred policies that would support the transition we need.*

*A Just Transition*

*It is normal to fear the unknown. However, we cannot afford to continue, as if our house is not on fire. We need to transition for the better of all in society and to reach those that are furthest behind in our society first.*

*A Social Justice lens*

*It is those who are least responsible for climate change that will suffers its gravest consequences. We cannot solve the climate crisis by ignoring Inequality and Human Rights. So, let's build global empathy and leave no one behind".*

Cllr. R. O'Connor stated that this had been discussed and endorsed by Wicklow County Council.

Cllr. D. O'Brien stated that the Group's expertise would be available to any member of any of the different Committees on the SPC who were looking for input from the Group.

It was agreed to endorse the Youth Manifesto on Climate Justice.

**Item 10 Any Other Business**

*Friends of Knocksink Wood*

The Chairman proposed that a letter from the SPC would be sent to Michael Noonan regarding Repts of Knocksink Wood with regard to the possibility of increasing funding to Knocksink Wood.

Ms. S. Jackson referred to an email she had sent to the Climate Action Team regarding the quality and potential of the archaeological site at Kilranelagh Hill and queried the best practice to have areas adjacent to the vestiges rezoned from orange to red in the upcoming Count Development Plan 2021-2027. Ms. Jackson stated that a local group had met with the Baltinglass Municipal District Councillors about two weeks. 9 ring forts had been identified. Ms Jackson agreed to circulate pictures to the Members.

Ms. Kilkenny stated that at the moment a proposed draft County Development Plan is being prepared and it will be issued to the Members by mid March so that the Members can examine it and once the Members are happy with it it will be published as a draft for members of the public to view. She stated that the Group should contact their local Councillors with regard to making a submission regarding zoning.

Cllr. J. Neary suggested that any future land being disposed of by Wicklow County Council is assessed for its biodiversity value. She suggested that this should be discussed at a future meeting. Ms. B. Kilkenny requested that Cllr. Neary would email Ms. D. Burns in relation to this as it may become a policy issue endorsed by the SPC and forwarded to the full County Council. The Chairman requested that the email should also be sent to the Members of the SPC.

Cllr. P. Leonard queried the Council's landscaping policy at pre planning stage. She queried if the national plans and guidelines in relation to landscaping of housing developments in relation to pollinator plan, biodiversity, etc. were sufficient to Architects who were preparing applications.

Ms. Kilkenny confirmed that as part of the review of the County Development Plan Ms. Burns has examined the Draft Plan. The County Development Plan has 3 pillars – Climate Action, Economic Development and Citizen Engagement. These are overarching themes that run through every chapter. The design standards have also been reviewed which assist people in making a planning application and has also been examined by Ms. Burns. Ms. Kilkenny confirmed that this is a draft plan and that all planning applications are being considered under the current County Development Plan which Ms. Burns would have had an input into. The new Plan will strengthen this area.

Cllr. L. Scott queried if Wicklow County Council has sufficient staff in order to monitor the guidelines and ensure compliance with same once developments are underway. Ms. Kilkenny stated that sufficient staff is not available to check every planning application. If someone makes a complaint the Team go out and investigate.

That concluded the business of the meeting.



Signed:

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Chairman

Date:

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