

**MINUTE OF THE CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY ACTION SPC HELD ON MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THE 9TH
DECEMBER, 2020, AT 2.30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Cllr. Rory O'Connor
Cllr. Dermot O'Brien
Ms. Sharon Jackson
Ms. Annette Kelly
Cllr. Lourda Scott
Cllr. Pier Leonard
Cllr. Jodie Neary

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms. Breege Kilkenny
Ms. Mary Cahill
Mr. James Callery
Ms. Theresa O'Brien
Ms. Deirdre Burns
Mr. Marc Devereux

Item 1: To note the minutes of meeting held on the 16th October 2020.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 16th October 2020 were proposed by Cllr. P. Leonard, seconded by Cllr. J. Neary and adopted. Cllr. Neary referred to item 3(b) of the Minutes and confirmed that the Low Carbon Development Amendment Bill 2020 was still only in Draft form and was not yet adopted.

Item 2: An update on the proposed offshore wind farms (Arklow Bank, Dublin and Codling Array)

Mr. Devereux gave a presentation which had been prepared by Ms. C. Flood, Economic Development.

Cllr. P. Leonard queried the green space at the North Beach Arklow and the use of the area for a compound of the Arklow Flood Relief Scheme. The area had been dug up and substantial trenches had been dug with no consultation. It was agreed that Mr. M. Devereux would examine this and follow it up.

Mr. Devereux referred to the community gain. He asked the members to be aware of it to try and ensure the community gain is used where it is needed.

In relation to a query from Ms. A. Kelly, Mr. Devereux confirmed that the Energy Regulator was a National Regulator set up by Government to regulate all energy suppliers.

Cllr. L. Scott stated that in relation to the visual aspects, a lot of work needs to be undertaken to educate the communities on the visual aspects and queried if the Committee could do anything to help educate the communities.

The role of the SPC was to guide the Council in relation to policies. While the Planning Department does its best to preserve the environment as much as possible, the Council does not have any control other than to act as a statutory consultee. If Mr. Devereux receives any documentation he will make the Committee aware of same.

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

(a) Implementation of the County Climate Adaptation Strategy

A guidance document for Local Authorities was being prepared by the CARO Working Group. This document would first be presented to the Climate Environmental Committee CCMA.

(b) EV Charging Points

3 locations had been identified, Shoreline Leisure Centre in Greystones, the Council Offices in Blessington and the Credit Union Offices in Blessington. There was a delay in supplying the points as the Council was waiting on the newest model to be available. Ms. Cahill stated that she was talking to Brendan Doyle, Executive Engineer, to look at the Council's own fleet. The light weight urban vehicles would be looked at first. TWES carried out an audit of our fleet in 2020 and this will inform us of vehicles that may be suitable to change over to EVs.

Ms. B. Kilkenny and Ms. M. Cahill are on the CCMA Working Group to look at best practice model for all local authorities. There is a social and political need for the Council to be involved in the installation of EV Charge Points, although it may not be financially viable.

Cllr. R. O'Connor referred to the request of Cllr. J. Behan of putting a charger in Kilmacanogue and queried whether the request should come through the Climate Action Team or should it go directly to the Roads Department.

Ms. Cahill confirmed that once embedded, the role of the Climate Action Team would be to help advise the individual Sections to deliver the actions in relation to Climate Action. Going forward the provision of chargers would be done through the Roads Section. (If the LAs become part of the model to deliver on the EVCPs)

Cllr. D. O'Brien stated that developments should be built in such a way that the infrastructure (e.g. ducting) is put in place when building the development and that the points could be installed at a later date. ie: Be EVCP ready.

(c) Tree Management Policy for County Wicklow

Ms. Cahill reiterated that the policy is to look at trees on public land. Ms. S. Meeres from UCD was collecting data. She had spoken with the PPN and the Municipal Districts. It was hoped to have a draft early in the New Year which will be brought to the SPC. The draft will be placed on the Council's website and sent to the PPN for consultation. It was felt that full consultation was not required as it is based on trees on land owned by Wicklow County Council. It was confirmed that the policy would not look at felling trees on private owned land.

In relation to hedgerows, Mr. Callery confirmed that Ms. Meeres would be outlining the procedures to be followed in relation to the cutting of hedgerows, but it was up to the landowners to cut the hedgerows.

(d) Funding

A database was currently being compiled detailing all grants available to the Local Authority.

An application for funding through UCD and Trinity for the Avoca Catchment had been refused. The Team were looking at other ways to fund it. One possibility was the Climate Action Fund in 2021. Cllr. P. Leonard stated that Arklow Municipal District had been awarded €35,000 for biodiversity in

the area and maybe some of that money could be used for the Avoca Catchment. However, Ms. Cahill confirmed that it was a much bigger project with over €1.2 million needed for research. Life Funding could be sought for the implementation stage.

In relation to funding, Cllr. O'Brien queried if it would be possible to collate information on grant aid being made available for biodiversity projects so that success stories could be celebrated.

(e) Alternatives to Glyphosate

The Foamstream machine had been purchased and was due to be delivered to the Bray depot. Training would be provided on the use of the machine for the operatives in Bray. There was no update in relation to the baseline of how much glyphosate is currently being used.

(f) Woodland Creation Scheme

Ms. Cahill confirmed that she was arranging for a Teagasc advisor to inspect four sites which have been identified as being suitable – Bray Head, Wicklow Head, San Souci and a site in Grangecon which the Tidy Towns have proposed. She would then go out to tender for a forester and ecologist. She asked that if any of the Members knew of any suitable sites around the County to let her know.

It was hoped to have a national procurement framework policy in place in future which will make the process easier.

There was a lot of small parcels of land around the County which had been CPO'd for motorway schemes. These parcels of land were land locked and therefore not suitable for development but may be suitable for the Scheme. However, the transfer of the title to the Council hadn't been registered. A lot of work would have to be undertaken in relation to the registration of title.

Cllr. P. Leonard stated that Irish Rail had parcels of land that may be suitable and maybe contact should be made with Irish Rail. Ms. Cahill confirmed that Irish Rail had made an application for funding. Irish Rail would need to make the application for funding themselves as only the landowner could make the application.

Ms. Burns was meeting the District Engineer for Arklow the following day and had agreed to raise the Scheme with him to see if any sites were suitable in Arklow.

Item 4: Biodiversity – to receive an update on Biodiversity Action

Ms. D. Burns gave an update on projects that she had been working on during 2020.

Brittas Bay Project. Work on this project has been continuing by Wicklow Municipal District. It is hoped to continue the butterfly transect and to engage with the wider community post Covid. Survey workshops had been held with four rare plants identified.

Swifts in Wicklow. Hotspots were identified in 2019. The emphasis in 2021 would be to increase the population of swifts in public buildings. Retrofitting of the buildings such as libraries, with nesting boxes would take place.

Gardening for Biodiversity / Garden Wildlife of Wicklow booklets were produced.

Healthy Ireland Initiatives: Ms. Burns confirmed that she was working on initiatives with the theme Nature is good for health. Advertisements had been placed on East Coast FM on the different themes.

Pollinator Plan: Ms. Burns was hoping to make a tutorial on how to make wildlife meadows along with Kildare / Kilkenny. It was hoped to officially launch this in 2021.

Creative Scheme: various short films had been produced on the natural built and cultural videos on the River Liffey. Work will start on River Avoca this year. Six films were commissioned, some on biodiversity, which will be launched shortly.

At the request of Cllr. R. O'Connor, Ms. D. Burns agreed to look at a site in Kilmacanogue which was part of the N.11 Scheme. It is now a public amenity but is the scene of anti social behaviour. It is owned by the Local Authority.

Item 5: Environmental Awareness – update on Environmental Awareness ongoing projects to include discussion on Transition Year Programme.

SDG Map:

Mr. Callery stated that he had made a presentation on the SDG map to the Regional Meeting of CARO. It was hoped that a pack would be distributed to other local authorities to share ideas.

UCD had been in contact with Mr. Callery in relation to a project they are undertaking in Dundrum, Dundrum 2020 where they were hoping to map indicators.

Fashion Competition: 20 teams had entered the competition. It was hoped that a virtual final would be at the end of January 2020. It was proposed that a video of each final outfit would be produced and put on social media to build up momentum with the overall winner being announced at the end of January.

Brown Bins: These have been rolled out to most of the County. A social media campaign had been undertaken. Free compost caddies were being given out at libraries.

Food waste: 4 videos had been produced in the Summer with over 50,000 viewings in County Wicklow with Catherine Fulvio. It was hoped to do the same for Christmas in collaboration with 8/9 local authorities. It was hoped to produce 7 x 30 second videos to focus on the different stages, e.g. shopping, storage, meal, leftovers, New Year's resolutions.

Wicklow Naturally: Food Poverty Group is organising seasonal campaigns for Christmas.

Energy: A SEC seminar was held on the 17th November, 2020, which was well attended with over 50 participants. A few groups have expressed an interest to become involved. Glimalure have completed their Energy Master Plan with Laragh hoping to complete theirs by the end of the year. Wicklow and Blessington have been signed up and hope to start shortly and Enniskerry and Kilcoole plan to come on board in 2021.

Ms. Kilkenny wished to acknowledge all the work that Deirdre had done on the biodiversity brochure, Wild Flower.

Ms. Kilkenny also referred to the Chamber Ireland Excellence Award and announced that Mr. J. Callery's Relove Fashion Project had won an Award.

Item 6: Energy : To receive an update on energy efficiency & emissions

Ms. M. Cahill referred to the BEC Grant application for 2021. She confirmed that she had been working with Three Counties Energy Agency (3CEA) in order to submit an application. She confirmed that, if an application was approved, approximately €500,000 would be required from Wicklow County Council as part of the match funding. If the Council was successful in receiving funding, details of the application would be circulated to the Members.

Item 7: To fix a date for the workshop on Climate Action Website

Ms. M. Cahill confirmed that the team had an internal meeting with Ms. Karen Boyle. Karen would set up the individual pages on the website and the Team would put up the content on each page.

Ms. T. O'Brien stated that it was proposed that meetings of the SPC would be held on the 2nd Wednesday of every month commencing on the 10th February which left January for the members to work on the website.

Ms. B. Kilkenny stated that Wednesdays clashed with the Arklow MD Meetings. Ms. O'Brien agreed to check this and to circulate a schedule of meetings for 2021 to the Members

Item 8: Any Other Business

Ms. S. Jackson referred to an email which she and Ms. A. Kelly had issued to the Team.

Tree Management Policy Steering Group

Work is being carried out on internal practices. Ms. D. Burns, Ms. M. Cahill and Mr. J. Callery were working with Ms. S. Meeres of UCD. It was not felt necessary to have Mr. Richard Nairn on a Steering Group. One of the engineers from Bray was going to be asked to attend the next progress meeting. Once a document was produced, it would be circulated to the Members for discussion. This would be near the end of January 2021 at the earliest.

Ms. Jackson stated that the biodiversity of insects was also very important.

It was agreed that Ms. Meeres would be asked to present to the Committee once a draft document is available. Consultation would take place through the PPN and website in relation to the policy document.

Question 3:

Map Water courses

Ms. Burns confirmed that there was a lack of resources in order to do this.

Mr. J. Callery worked with the schools in relation to raising awareness. One project that he was examining was the possibility of working with the schools along the Avoca River Catchment for the students to carry out some project – mapping, water quality, local heritage along river, biodiversity. It could be rolled out to other areas after Avoca.

Ms. M. Cahill stated that a number of discussions had taken place about Transition Year Programmes and other projects that could be rolled out, such as energy audits in the home / school, heritage projects, cleaning up old graveyards. It was agreed that topics needed to be broken down into smaller projects, eg. Tree planting. The emphasis to be placed on the fact that climate action is much more than one global matter.

It was suggested that students could discuss with their grandparents the history of the area and document the stories.

Agendas

It was queried if the agenda for the meetings could be issued earlier to allow for consultation with linkage groups.

Ms. M. Cahill stated that the agendas were issued as quickly as was possible. However, a lot of the items were standing items and would appear on most agendas. It was hard to tie down items to put on the agenda 3 weeks in advance. Consultation took place with the Chairman approximately ten days before the meeting with regard to the agenda. Cllr. R. O'Connor stated that he wouldn't like to see a shorter timespan in order to get items on agendas.

Ms. A. Kelly asked for a list of dates for 2021 so that ten days prior to the meeting she could ask the various groups if there should be anything put on the agenda.

Cllr. R. O'Connor stated that if a Member wanted anything to be put on the Agenda that they should make the request through him as Chairman. SPCs statutorily only had to meet four times a year, however this SPC were meeting more regularly and would meet six times a year.

Informal Meetings:

Ms. M. Cahill stated that an internal meeting had taken place between the Team and it was felt that there was no need for update meetings as a lot of duplication would occur between the update meetings and the formal SPC Meetings. Everything at the SPC would be minuted.

The uplands area was discussed and it was requested that same be put on a future agenda. The Uplands Council should be requested to attend a meeting to give an update on their work.

Ms. Cahill confirmed that the Team were on numerous other committees which had representatives of the Uplands Council on it. Ms. Burns confirmed she dealt with the Uplands Council all the time. It was agreed that they would be asked to present to the SPC. However there is a backlog of presentations that the Members want made.

If the Members wished for presentations to be made to the SPC, a request for same should be made through the Chairman who would discuss same with Ms. B. Kilkenny and Ms. T. O'Brien.

Ms. O'Brien agreed to circulate a document in relation to the role of the SPCs which was to approve policy before it goes to the full Membership of the Council.

Ms. S. Jackson queried if the presentations would be made available to linkage groups. It was agreed that the Team wouldn't have the resources to make presentations to the linkage groups. It was up to the Members of the Committee to report back on the SPC Meetings to the PPN.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date: _____