

MINUTES OF THE CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY ACTION STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 22ND OF JUNE 2022 AT 10.30AM

PRESENT: Cllr. Lourda Scott (Cathaoirleach)
Cllr. Peir Leonard
Cllr. Rory O'Connor
Cllr. Dermot O'Brien
Cllr. Jodie Neary
Franny Raven
Tom Short
Michael Storan
Justin Ivory
Sharon Jackson
Gary McKenzie

IN ATTENDANCE: Jackie Carroll, Senior Executive Officer
Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer
Mary Cahill, Senior Executive Engineer
Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer
Paul Brophy, Executive Technician
Tom Fox, Executive Engineer
Ciara Ruane, Assistant Staff Officer

APOLOGIES: Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services
Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer

Item 1: Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th April 2022

The minutes of the Climate and Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee held on the 28th of April 2022 were proposed by Justin Ivory and seconded by Cllr. Rory O'Connor, subject to amendments detailed below.

Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

Amendments made to the minutes as follows:

(Item 3) It was noted that increasingly, climate **and biodiversity** action is embedded in the community actions.

(Item 7) The B-Lines are a series of '**wildlife corridors**' running through the countryside and towns.....

Item 3: Update on Membership of Climate & Biodiversity Action SPC

Michael Storan was welcomed and introduced as the new representative of the Construction Industry Federation. It was confirmed that a potential Fisheries nominee has been identified. Members will be updated once in place.

Item 4: Correspondence

a) Training Webinar :

A link to the recent CARO training course will be circulated to all SPC members.

b) Coastal Erosion:

It was advised that Irish Rail have confirmed the imminent appointment of consultants to take the East Coast Erosion Project to the next stage following the completion of a risk assessment on the railway line from Ringsend to Arklow.

Solutions envisaged include:

- Upgrade of existing rock armour in the Bray Head and Greystones area.
- Greystones North Beach to be managed with natural and self-managing methods of beach nourishment and a breakwater system. A breakwater system is also proposed from Greystones to Newcastle and Newcastle to Wicklow Harbour. Rock armour at Wicklow Town will be upgraded or extended as necessary.
- This approach creates opportunities for improved off shore biodiversity resulting from these structures.
- Civil Engineering intervention is not a suitable approach for the management of the dunes at Brittas Bay and it is hoped that financial support will be made available from the OPW for a natural biodiversity method.
- The area north of Arklow Harbour needs to be refurbished and a breakwater is suggested in addition to natural biodiversity based resilience.
 - Beach nourishment has been suggested as a nature based solution for the South Beach.
 - Arklow MD is proposing taking the Brittas Bay and Arklow North/South Beach projects to the OPW for funding with the Oyster reef restoration project running alongside. Tom Fox, Executive Engineer, will run both projects. The steering committee will meet with Irish Rail in September/October and it was confirmed that either Marc Devereux or Tom Fox will be sitting on same. As this is an Irish Rail project WCC has limited scope to get Norri etc. involved although such involvement would make sense.
 - The importance of incorporating natural based solutions was discussed.
 - A discussion on the Dublin Port/Arklow project took place - details of the project can be found on dublinport.ie.
 - It was confirmed that the Council has no role below the foreshore and no statutory powers when we step into the water. The Marine Planning Act, which has been adopted but not yet commenced, includes a role for WCC in planning for the first 3kms i.e. powers are limited to the harbour area.
 - Cllr. Piers Leonard will contact Marc Devereux and Paul Ivory to discuss the possibility of bio-mimicry.
 - An in-house multi-disciplinary team including an ecologist have been involved since the start of the Irish Rail project. A Public Information Day took place in County Buildings in 2019 and some submissions were received from local action groups with National Parks and Wildlife Services consulted heavily in the early stages.

In relation to the Fish Barriers Working Group, it was advised that two pilot projects at Three Trouts Stream in Delgany and Ballinglen have been prepared and are currently under discussion with the District

Engineers. The Community Water Officer will carry out public consultation in July and August and it is hoped that the positive effect for biodiversity will ensure communities embrace same with works being carried out at the end of August. Marc Devereux will circulate a link for the public consultation.

c) Biodiversity Officer:

It was confirmed that the Minister has announced the appointment of six Biodiversity Officers but locations for same have not been confirmed. The post is fully funded in year 1. Appointments will be by end of 2022 and HR will expedite the process if Wicklow is allocated the post.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the Council has a limited role in relation to the Wicklow Uplands and the issue of habitat loss caused by the deer population will be raised when possible with appropriate stakeholders. The importance of awareness of such matters in managing deer with problems such as disease, road accidents and grazing, were discussed.

Item 5: Climate Action Plan & Policy Update

A consultant will be drawn down from the framework of consultants which is currently being put in place by CARO and work on the climate action plan and commencement of the risk assessment piece will then begin. There is no ministerial direction as to a time line as yet.

Tree Policy: The County Gardener is working with the MDS identifying locations where tree surveys will be carried out and she will also source an arborist.

The Glyphosate Policy has been rescheduled for the agenda at the next Council meeting and the Municipal District engineers are currently completing business cases for areas in which they wish to use Glyphosate.

A tender to carry out a Hedgerow survey has been advertised.

It was advised that the introduction of apps must be cleared with the unions and no timeline is available.

Regarding the Conservation Management Plans, the Committee was advised that a consultant for Clermont will be appointed soon and following a lack of tender response the Council is in negotiated procedure with a suitable consultant to carry out a conservation management plan for both Wicklow and Bray Heads.

Item 6: Energy Bureau

No tenders were received and negotiated procedure was commenced with Codema.

Item 7: Environment Awareness Initiatives

The members received a presentation from Jim Callery which covered the following topics:

- Wicklow Naturally working group on sustainability website.
- An education programme for transition year students developed in conjunction with Kildare and Meath Coco's which will now be included in the Future Leaders Programme was launched in Croke Park in May.
- Composting has been introduced in County Buildings by way of a rotary composter and two wormeries. Output will be used directly around the building.
- Herbs, fruit and veg are being grown in recycled plastic containers in peat free organic compost on the roof outside the canteen.

- Donate Don't Waste Campaign is an EPA funded textile collection to study what can be done to increase the collection and use of textiles. Two 1-day events recently took place in Arklow which linked up with St. Vincent De Paul with each event receiving 150 bags out of which 20 will be graded for quality and reuse.
- Sustainable Energy Communities – Greystones, Delgany and Wicklow are complete with Enniskerry and Blessington due to complete this summer. An energy usage survey is taking place in Arklow. Laragh and Wicklow ran well attended awareness days.
- Bike for Africa Campaign – bikes are collected in recycling centres and sent to Shelton Abbey for repair and onward shipping to students in the Gambia.
- Bray, Wicklow and Arklow recycling centres are taking in old school books and uniforms with the Scouts organising a sale of same on August 6th.
- Schools - Reloved Fashion competition has been relaunched for 2022. 17 schools have been awarded green flags this year.
- Blue Flag Beaches – an audio device is in place on Blue Flag beaches with the current message relating to dogs on beaches and dog fouling. Devices are located away from housing.
- Sea Shore Safari children's workshops will take place in August on Blue Flag and Arklow beaches.
- Tidy Towns awards have launched.
- Dog fouling campaign which includes 6 videos, 7 social media posts, 1 gif and a newspaper advert will be launched jointly by 12 local authorities in early July.
- The implementation plan for the decarbonization zone in Arklow is nearing completion following which there will be more consultation with stakeholders. Report is expected week of July 6th.

Item 8: AOB

Your Council Day is taking place on July 1st and is an opportunity for Councils to showcase initiatives and the excellent service provided. This year's theme is climate action.

Green Team Initiatives include a travel survey which will be circulated amongst all WCC staff. A paper usage policy is being prepared to encourage the use of recycled paper across the organisation. A competition will be run to come up with a suitable logo for the GT.

An update was circulated on Heritage & Biodiversity activity.

Comhairle na n'Og recently held an event which included a piece on their vision for the future of Wicklow in terms of sustainability. This will feed into the LECP and the PPN's work.

Franny Raven, who represented the Comhairle, has stepped down from the SPC and was warmly thanked for her contribution to date. A nomination will be sought to fill this vacancy.

A request was made to include Mountains to Sea on the agenda at the next SPC meeting.

Confirmation of the Climate representative to the steering committee will be sought and the members advised of same.

Next meeting 22nd September 2022 @ 10.30