

**MINUTES OF THE CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY ACTION STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 19<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2023 AT 10.00AM**

**PRESENT:** Cllr. Lourda Scott (Cathaoirleach)  
Cllr. Peir Leonard  
Cllr. Rory O'Connor  
Cllr. Mark Barry  
Sharon Jackson  
Justin Ivory  
Michael Storan

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Jackie Carroll, Senior Executive Officer  
Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer  
Declan Keogh, Regional Energy Manager  
Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer  
Laura Kehoe, Biodiversity Officer  
Paul Brophy, Executive Technician  
Ciara Ruane, Assistant Staff Officer

**APOLOGIES:** Cllr. Dermot O'Brien  
Ken Sweeney  
Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services  
Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer  
Mary Cahill, Senior Executive Engineer

**Item 1: Minutes of the Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2023**

The minutes of the Climate and Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Rory O'Connor and seconded by Cllr. Pier Leonard.

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

An update on new staff members for the Climate Action Team was sought. The following were confirmed:

Climate Action Officer: Jim Callery has been appointed and is in place.

Regional Energy Manager (Mid-East): Declan Keogh has been appointed and is in place.

Community Climate Action Officer: Post will be taken up on 24<sup>th</sup> of April.

Climate Action Coordinator: Offer has been made.

Energy Officer: William Halligan has been appointed but no start date.

Biodiversity Officer: Laura Kehoe has been appointed and is in place.

Assistant Environmental Awareness Officer: Hannah O'Kelly has been appointed and is in place.

An update will be provided in relation to the tender for an arborist to carry out a survey in each MD to establish a baseline on trees in the public domain.

The 18mth review of the tree policy will be an agenda item for meeting on June 7<sup>th</sup> next

**Item 3: Update from Biodiversity Officer:**

The group received a presentation from Laura Kehoe, Biodiversity Officer.

In relation to the Biodiversity Plan, public consultations will take place over the course of this year with plans for a 3-day stakeholder engagement to take place early in 2024.

Citizens Assembly Report on Biodiversity Loss – The report contains over 150 recommendations that have the potential to transform Ireland’s relationship with the natural environment. The members welcomed the presentation on this matter and Laura Kehoe and Cllr. Scott will discuss the possibility of a public information meeting.

The Fraser River Estuary Conservation Project in Canada. The Conservation Decision Science approach has become the model for conservation projects across New Zealand and in parts of Australia and North America. It has enabled New Zealand to effectively manage 470+ species for the same budget as 188 species in 2009. The Conservation Science Decision approach gathers expertise from all stakeholder specialities, the experts meet for an intense three and a half days and group all species, ecosystems and habitat according to agreed criteria and then establish the cost-benefit price of conserving or re-establishing 60% of a species number or 60% of an area of habitat to be viable in 20 years’ time. This participatory and practical cost-benefit approach establishes which actions are most cost-effective and shows both the public and budget decision makers what will be achieved and avoided when they commit a given sum of money over time.

**Item 4: Update on Mid-East Energy Unit:**

The group received a comprehensive presentation from Declan Keogh, Regional Energy Manager on how Wicklow County Council is to achieve its energy efficiency targets of 50% improvement in energy efficiency and 51% reduction in Green House Gas Emissions by 2030.

There are significant challenges for Wicklow, with 4 Swimming pools under their remit, a large and aging council fleet (majority diesel) and inefficient buildings

It was noted that the four pools are the most significant energy users and it was suggested that any future pool should be built with the addition of solar panels and heat pumps. The technology is available but the costs are significant.

It was advised that WCC are looking at the possibility of buying another EV for possible use in the Port. Other areas will be looked at for future suitability.

The members requested a presentation on public lighting from Transportation, Water and Emergency Services at the next meeting.

ISO 50001 – The members were advised that Wicklow County Council recently signed an Energy Policy to commit to responsible energy management and is seeking accreditation to ISO standard.

The council aims to continue to meet or exceed best practice in energy efficiency and to minimise environmental impact as far as is possible. The SEAI will facilitate a 10 day training course running from end of April to December. After the 10 days are complete auditors will be appointed who will carry out an inspection. Accreditation follows after highlighted areas are attended to with inspections on an annual basis thereafter.

In response to a question on energy usage of IT servers it was advised that this will be looked at and separated from the rest of the building. Each floor will also be isolated and reported on separately.

**Item 5: Climate Action Plan:**

A Tender process was carried out for the environmental assessment piece from which Fehily Timony was selected. They are currently preparing for stakeholder engagement which will take place in May. Having received no response in a request for quotations for a facilitator we are now negotiating with 3 companies and selection is imminent. The summary report will be finalised by the last week in April.

Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals:

The wording on the goals was discussed.

Vision: There was concern that there is not enough emphasis on the natural world. The SPC was advised that the primary focus must be on climate action however, we will be looking at actions that deliver for climate action as well as biodiversity. It is an overarching statement with the focus on reduction in emissions and adaptation, whilst the specifics will be embedded in the actions they may not be mentioned in the vision. Jim Callery will look at the language and strengthen language about the need for regenerative natural systems.

Mission: This was agreed.

Strategic Goals:

Jim Callery will change wording where necessary.

**Item 6: Any Other Business:**

LECP - With Climate Action a key pillar of the LECP a question was asked if the SPC would have an opportunity to have input into the 1<sup>st</sup> draft stage. Jackie Carroll will revert.

Presentation from Planning – The members requested that they receive a presentation at the next meeting from Planning regarding environmental compliance with permissions.

Cllr. Rory O'Connor stated that as a local authority with a large fleet of vehicles we should be cognisant of more sustainable tyres now being produced by many companies.

It was stated that there is a perceived lack of consistency between the Council's actions and environmental awareness in relation to grass cutting. There is frustration amongst the public who are trying to engage but then see perceived inconsistency from the Council. The members were advised that pollinator areas have been agreed between the Heritage Officer and the Municipal District and managed in a systematic way. It was suggested that it would be good to have an online map showing mow or grow areas. Referencing 'no mow' it was requested that the district engineers be reminded to do an autumn cut with the possible assistance of residents committees.

It was noted that the Council has funded a feasibility study relating to a proposed greenway adjacent to through an SAC.

It was advised that Norri have planted hatchery seeds in Cork and it is hoped that these seeds will be rolled out as a pilot in the harbours with suitable locations being allocated. A presentation from East Wicklow Rivers Trust and Norri on all restoration projects was requested.

A presentation on Avoca Mines was requested. It was advised that the department is fully funding ongoing works but there are staffing issues. An update will be provided.

The Blessington Allotments campaign would like to present to the SPC at the September meeting. They are looking for land from WCC to enable expansion and continuation of their campaign. This is considered to be a matter for the Municipal District.

<b>Register of Actions</b>	
Citizens Assembly Report – possible Public Information Meeting	Cllr. Scott and Laura Kehoe to discuss
LED Lighting – changeover to warmer light	TWES to update at next meeting
LECP – 1 <sup>st</sup> stage draft – SPC input	Jackie Carroll to advise
Avoca Mines	Jackie Carroll will seek update

Next meeting of the CABA SPC is **June 7<sup>th</sup> 2023 @ 10.00am.**