

**MINUTES OF THE CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY ACTION STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 7<sup>TH</sup> OF DECEMBER 2022 AT 10.30AM**

**PRESENT:** Cllr. Lourda Scott (Cathaoirleach)  
Cllr. Rory O'Connor  
Cllr. Dermot O'Brien  
Cllr. Mark Barry  
Cllr. Pier Leonard  
Justin Ivory  
Tom Shortt

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services  
Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer  
Mary Cahill, Senior Executive Engineer  
Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer  
Paul Brophy, Executive Technician  
Ciara Ruane, Assistant Staff Officer

**APOLOGIES:** Michael Storan  
Kate Dolan  
Ken Sweeney  
Gary McKenzie  
Sharon Jackson  
Deirdre Burns

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Cllr. Mark Barry as replacement for Cllr. Jodie Neary.

**Item 1: To Note the Minutes of CABA SPC Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2022**

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

Amendments were requested at Item 4, Item 7 and to the Action section of the minutes. These amendments have been made.

The minutes of the Climate and Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee held on the 6th of October 2022, were proposed by Cllr. Rory O'Connor and seconded by Cllr. Pier Leonard.

**Item 3: Wicklow Climate Action Plan:**

The members received a presentation from Mary Cahill and Jim Callery on the Wicklow Climate Action Plan. A copy of the presentation has been circulated to the SPC members.

The plan, which has to be adopted by 2024, is expected to achieve Ministerial instruction by March 2023 and it will be necessary to achieve completion within 12 months.

It was suggested and agreed that the scheduling of CABA SPC meetings for 2023 will be drawn up in January to align with actions of the Climate Action Plan.

The Cathaoirleach commended Mary Cahill and Jim Callery on their excellent presentation and on the forward work already completed.

In response to a question it was advised that there is no sanction in place for a Communications Officer who would take on the role of coordinating stakeholder engagement but there could be involvement by the new Community Climate Officer and Assistant Environmental Awareness Officer when appointed. Jim Callery advised that we will work more with local stakeholders with our colleagues dealing with relevant departments and agencies bringing input on policies development for their sections. It was generally agreed that stakeholder engagement is vital

A discussion took place on the use of nature based solutions in relation to flood risk management and the need to incorporate them into all aspects of our work. It was advised that nature based solutions do not protect from a 1 in 100 year weather event but are useful in less than 5 year events and offer benefits to water quality. Bigger civil engineering schemes are still necessary but there is scope to use both. Projects where nature based solutions could be introduced include Avoca Mines, but every project should have some element in them.

It was suggested that a question is included in the application for LEADER funding referencing what we are trying to do in relation to the LA CAP.

Returning to the LA CAP, it was agreed that it is important to provide a visual of the benefits 'at the end', i.e. greener town centres, circular economy, wellness.

A discussion took place about the importance of food poverty in addition to fuel poverty. The food poverty piece was not mentioned in the presentation but WCC do a lot of work with local partners and in building partnerships with communities which should be reflected in the LA CAP

In answer to a question about the consultants who have been engaged for the climate change risk assessment and measurement of the county's baseline emissions it was confirmed that they have international expertise and have also been engaged by other L.A.s too. The first meeting to start the process has been programmed for January 5<sup>th</sup> 2023. We may benefit from lessons learnt with their work with other L.A.'s. In relation to sufficient number of staff available to meet the time frame it was that the whole team, which includes 6 new roles, will be in place during Q1 2023.

The importance of youth engagement was emphasised and it was confirmed that the team will work closely with Comhairle Na Nog and a secondary school will be selected to see what voices come from there.

It was advised that lessons learned from the stakeholder engagement piece of the Arklow decarbonisation zone will be taken into account when developing the LA CAP and workshops are the best way to proceed.

In terms of the agri-sector, one of the most successful SEC's is based in Dingle where a group of farmers have introduced a number of initiatives including solar on shed roofs, anaerobic digesters to improve their energy performance. The introduction of an SEC in rural Wicklow which is focused on agri which would benefit from this shared learning would be very welcome.

In response to a question it was advised that the Government Climate Action Plan is reviewed annually. LA CAP's are evidence based and should be a living document and plans can be updated in line with local opportunities on a bottom up basis. It was agreed that the appointment of a consultant to facilitate stakeholder engagement, was a good idea.

**Item 4: Any Other Business:**

Funding was recently announced for the All Ireland Unit. It was requested that the SPC look into teaming up with local authorities in the North and other possible North/South collaboration funding.

It was requested that a formal plan is put forward for coastal protection for the South of the county as OPW works stop at Brittas Bay(Should this be Wicklow Town. My understanding is that they have only worked on the line of the railway). It was advised that Mark Costello, Executive Engineer, has been appointed and that task has been assigned to him. Arklow Nth and Sth beach will be looked at early 2023. He is also preparing the application for OPW funding for the Arklow coastal erosion project and will progress same. Nature based solutions are being incorporated into the application. Stakeholders such as Norri and other councillors will be contacted as part of the process with the application being submitted Q1 2023.

It was requested that Mark Costello present to the SPC on urban drainage with a nature based solution angle included. It was advised that the issue of urban flooding in Arklow is worsening.

A question was posed as to the possibility of including a list of requirements for nature based solutions and biodiversity in future planning applications. It was confirmed that there is a reference in the County Development Plan that where guidance for nature based solutions exists it will be used. Planners now have to consider this part of the plan when making planning decisions but all reports must be considered.

The Wicklow Greystones Greenway rests currently with Corporate Services and an update will be sought.

The meeting concluded with the Cathaoirleach thanking the team for all their hard work in 2023.

**REGISTER OF ACTIONS:**

|                                                        |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Presentation to be circulated to SPC Members           | Complete |
| Details of 6 new roles to be circulated to SPC Members | Complete |