

**Minutes of the Climate Action, Biodiversity, Environment, Energy, Marine, Recreation and
Amenity Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on Friday 26th September 2025 at 10 am by
zoom**

PRESENT: Cllr. Erika Doyle (Cathaoirleach)
Cllr. Lourda Scott
Cllr. Peir Leonard
Cllr. Danny Alvey
Cllr. Jason Mulhall
Emma Smith (PPN Representative, West Wicklow, Env Seat)
Anthony Ardee (Business/Commercial Representative)
Michael Storan (Development/Construction Representative)
Austin Baines (Community/Voluntary Representative)
Tom Byrne (Agricultural Representative)

IN ATTENDANCE: Theresa O'Brien (Director of Services, CERA)
Mary Cahill (Senior Engineer, CERA)
Sarah McCullough (Senior Executive Officer, CERA)
Margaret Birchall (Senior Executive Librarian, CERA)
Mark Costello (Climate Action Coordinator, CERA)
Aisling Hubbard (Sports Administrator, CERA)
Eoin Kelly (Administrative Officer, CERA)
Grainne O'Neill (Administrative Officer, CERA)
Megan Olohan (Staff Officer, CERA)

APOLOGIES: Justin Ivory (PPN Representative, East Wicklow, Env Seat)
Cllr. Dermot O'Brien
Dr. Hannah O'Kelly (Biodiversity Officer, CERA)
Jim Callery (Climate Action Officer, CERA)

1) Approval of the minutes from previous SPC Meetings

The minutes of previous meetings were proposed by Cllr. Pier Leonard and seconded by Emma Smith.

2) Presentation on County Wicklow Libraries

Before commencing her presentation Margaret Birchall in particular wanted to note that the closing of Blessington Library is only a temporary arrangement until such time as it has its full staff compliment. Tinahely and Aughirm libraries are also short of staff at present.

Margaret Birchall gave a very comprehensive presentation outlining all the services for the libraries.

These are just some of the many excellent services available at the libraries: -

- Sensory toys available to borrow.
- Classroom book sets available for schools to borrow an entire collection of book sets to teach an entire class.
- Age Friendly monitors to borrow and bring home.
- Blood pressure monitors free of charge to borrow
- Story trials – publish books and put them on various trials throughout the County.
- My Open Library – 8am to 10pm, 365 days a year in both Arklow and Wicklow Libraries, will also be available in Ballywaltrim when works are completed.
- Literary Resources offered to every school in the County.
- Third Space Library – another space that is comfortable, safe, trusted.

MB finished with stating the WCC Library Strategy was currently being worked on for 2026.

Cllr Doyle thanked MB for such an interesting and informative presentation and opened it up to any questions and comments.

Emma Smith said that she was pleased to have had the pleasure of working with Margaret and the staff of Blessington library in the past and asked if the libraries have a native seed catalogue? MB stated that Bray library does with the support of Bray Tidy Towns and Greystones also have a seed library. ES commented that it was great to see this service in Blessington and Baltinglass also.

ES also mentioned that she had come across the community garden in Blessington and the story trials – it was such fun walking through and it's an excellent way of getting families out into nature.

As discussion was held regarding book clubs and writers' groups by ES to which MB stated that this is going well in Baltinglass and Arklow and she does agree that libraries are a great space for these groups.

Cllr. Leonard said she is one of the libraries biggest fans and their success stories in County Wicklow. She asked how can the elected members help to secure investment into our library services. She also spoke about the number of children not going to school and if this could be explored in terms of homeschool outreach and a pathway back to school for the children with the assistance of the libraries? MB mentioned homeschooling groups like the one in Blessington could be set up around the county. There are also educational resources in the libraries to help strengthen homeschooling for the children.

Cllr. Alvey thanked MB for a very informative presentation and asked what the process was for setting up a new branch e.g. there is no library in Newtown. MB stated that there is a procedure for same including departmental interest, funding, acquiring land/space etc. MB mentioned that the mobile library goes to Newtown.

Cllr Mitchell thanked MB for an excellent presentation and stated that libraries are at the heart of all communities, and the library staff are very supportive and helpful.

MB gave a quick update on Ballywaltrim Library timeline.

3) Presentation on Casual Trading Bye-Laws

Megan Olohan gave a very informative presentation on Casual Trading including an overview of the Casual Trading Act 1995 and the adopted Bylaws for Wicklow 2012.

Antony Ardee thanked MO for an excellent presentation and asked if the farmers markets were under the umbrella of casual trading. A discussion was held regarding farmers markets and special events licences that do not come under the remit of casual trading.

MO stated that there are several enquiries regarding casual trading and it is very important to be aware of the businesses in that area together with what is the community need for that area.

Cllr Mulhall thanks MO for her presentation and mentioned the Blessington Mart Casual Trading pitches and why there no interest in these pitches as there was no footfall or passing traffic at this location.

Cllr Mulhall agreed that the lack of footfall at the Blessington Marts didn't justify the 3 No pitches assigned in the current Bye-laws. MO suggested that when the Bye-laws are being reviewed we could look at following a similar approach that South Dublin Council used where pitches can be revoked without overhauling byelaws each time. In order words it affords WCC the opportunity to change the pitches in line with community demand.

MO answered Cllr Mulhall as this is the reason why WCC need to look at re-designating the locations as we need to be mindful of putting pitches in areas where there is footfall but also be consigne of driving innovation in this area. The balancing act is putting these pitches in areas where people like to go and trying to promote areas where there is not much footfall.

Cllr. Mulhall raised the issue regarding coffee huts in the Blessington area, however MO stated that if these coffee huts are on private land, it is a matter of planning enforcement and does not fall under the remit of Casual Trading.

Cllr Alvey thanks MO for her excellent presentation and mentioned that some of its questions have already been addressed, however, he did ask the question could there by more locations/pitches in the Bye-laws? He mentioned in particular the area of Annamoe where he feels the footfall in this area would justify a casual trading pitch.

Cllr Leonard thanked MO for her presentation and mentioned that the information on the website was not very informative regarding the Casual Trading Fees. This is something that brought regularly at Arklow TC meetings, trading in general, however this may be more under the remit of special events licences.

Cllr Doyle enquired regarding Bray MD. MO answered as Bray MD have their own Casual Trading Bye-laws dated 2016 and they allocate the kiosks on Bray Seafront under these bye-laws.

Cllr. Doyle asked who was responsible for managing waste generated by casual traders. MO stated that under the current bye-laws, each licence holder is required to provide and manage their own waste receptacle. Once a customer leaves the trading area, however, the responsibility for disposal rests with the consumer. MO further suggested that, in the context of any future review of the byelaws, WCC could consider including environmentally conscious conditions – for example, restrictions on single-use plastics and minimum standards for power sources used on-site.

1. Update on the draft Wicklow County Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP)

Aisling Hubbard said there was nothing new to present regarding the CORP other than adopt it with some possible minor changes.

There had been 2 public consultations in Wicklow and Blessington, together with over 1,200 online submissions.

In terms of delivering the CORP itself AH said WCC need to build on what we have already while being sympathetic to the environment and its natural amenities.

Cllr Doyle thanked AH and all the staff involved in the process of the CORP.

Cllr Leonard agreed that it made sense to look after what we already have in County Wicklow. She also mentioned looking at all public toilets along our coastline and beaches in particular Clogga Beach and the toilets at Arklow Harbour.

Cllr Alvey welcomed the plan's diversity in terms of utilising what already on our doorstep including walking trails, and underutilised horse-riding trails.

TO'B thanks AH, CC and all the staff involved in the CORP and all their professional and hard work demonstrated.

ES stated that she didn't remember getting a copy of the CORP, however, she very much welcomes it. AH explained that a copy of the CORP went out to all by email.

Cllr Doyle reiterated once more the huge amount of work that went into and thanks to all involved. Cllr Doyle then asked for the CORP to be proposed and seconded.

Cllr Alvey proposed the COPR and Cllr Leonard seconded it.

The CORP will now go to the full Council for adoption.

4) Update on the draft Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2025-2030

In the absence of Hannah O'Kelly, Mark Costello gave the update of the plan.

- 22 No. Submissions received.
- Science programmes currently being rolled out.

- WCC Hedgerow Survey
- Dark Sky Reserve coming to Wicklow
- Department seeking WCC land for planting forestry
- Fehily Timoney & Co. Ltd awarded the contract
- Screening reports due today
- Public Consultation Amendments needs to be screened - ongoing

Cllr Doyle said there were no further questions regarding the BAP and this is testament to the amount of time and work that went into it.

Cllr Leonard agreed with Cllr Doyle and that all were very happy with the plan.

Adopt at next SPC and then full Council in December.

5) Any Other Business

None.

The next meeting is scheduled for the 14th November in the Chamber.

This concluded the business of the meeting.