

MINUTE OF THE CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY ACTION STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 10TH JUNE 2021 AT 3.00 P.M. BY MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT: Cllr. Rory O'Connor, Chairman
Cllr. Peir Leonard
Cllr. Dermot O'Brien
Cllr. Lourda Scott
Cllr. Jodie Neary
Ms. Sharon Jackson
Ms. Franny Raven
Mr. Justin Ivory

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms. Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services
Ms. Jackie Carroll, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Mary Cahill, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. Jim Callery, A/Environmental Awareness Officer
Ms. Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer
Mr. Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer
Mr. Tom Griffin, Senior Chemist

Item 1; Minutes of Meeting held on the 11th February 2021

The Minutes of the Climate and Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee held on the 11th February 2021 were proposed by Cllr. L Scott, seconded by Cllr. J. Neary and agreed.

Item 2: Minutes Of the Meeting held on the 8th April 2021.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 8th April 2021, were proposed by Cllr. P. Leonard. Cllr. L. Scott seconded the Minutes on the proviso that the sentence under item 4 'greenways were a priority for the Green Party' be removed. The Minutes were agreed.

Item 3 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

Item 4: To discuss the following Policies:

(i) Air Quality Policy

The Cathaoirleach requested that the matter of implementing an Air Quality Policy similar to that of Cork County Council be considered.

Mr. Tom Griffin, Senior Chemist, Wicklow County Council advised the committee that the Department of the Environment is currently finalising the National Air Quality Strategy, following extensive public consultation. He noted that the Council works with the EPA on installation of air quality monitoring equipment in the larger urban areas and that monitors have been installed in Bray and Greystones.

The Committee discussed the matter at length and it was agreed that Wicklow County Council would investigate the possibility of installing an air quality monitor for the Decarbonisation Zone in Arklow and one also in Blessington. This would create a baseline which would be very useful. It was noted that the SEC in Arklow have been doing research on fuel usage which indicated that 20% of people

burn coal, 30% oil, 30% gas with some homes not having a heating system. There is a fuel poverty in Arklow. As there are budgetary considerations, the cost of the provision of these monitors will be included in the Estimate of Expenses for 2022.

(ii) Tree Policy

A presentation on the draft Tree Policy was given by Ms. Sophia Meeres, UCD.

Ms. Meeres stated that she had met with the Climate Action Team, the Municipal Districts, the PPN, the Tree Council, ecologists and other stakeholders to review current practise and develop and co-ordinate best practice.

She gave a comprehensive overview of current practises in tree management and issues identified, including the following:

- There is no County inventory of trees
- Wicklow County Council manage the trees and hedges along with a vast range of other services at a Municipal District level.
- Wicklow County Council has no control over trees on private land unless they are subject to TPOs.

In order to implement the strategy fully, it was recommended that, subject to resources being available, the Council consider the appointment of a Tree Officer to implement the policy.

The Committee welcomed the presentation and a discussion ensued, during which such matters as planning development and tree management, merits of Tree Preservation Orders and resources required to fully implement the policy.

Regarding the proposal to have a public consultation on the policy, it was noted that the Members of the SPC were either Elected Members or were representing a sectoral interest. A survey had been conducted by the PPN which formed the basis of the draft policy.

It was agreed that, following circulation of the draft policy to the SPC members, the Cathaoirleach would host a public webinar and any feedback would be brought back to the Climate Action Team.

It was proposed that a further meeting would be held in July to recommend the Policy to the full Council Meeting.

It was noted that while Bray had a budget for such works, the other Municipal Districts will need to be provided with a budget which the Councillors will have to agree when they are agreeing the budget.

The members requested that other sources of funding be investigated also.

(iii) Lighting Policy

Ms. Mary Cahill referred to the very informative presentation that was held the previous day by Professor Brian Epsy. Ms. Cahill stated that she was hoping to organise a further presentation for all the Members of Wicklow County Council and other Sections of the Council including the Municipal Districts and CCSD. Professor Epsy was holding a one hour webinar next Wednesday night from 7 to 8. Ms. Cahill agreed to send round the link for this talk.

Cllr. P. Leonard queried if some of the energy savings that were going to be made could be transferred to fund other projects.

Mr. Devereux stated that proposed energy projects were being funded from loans taken out and which were being paid back from energy savings such as the PLEEP Programme.

It was confirmed to Cllr. Scott that warmer LED lights were being used as part of the PLEEP Project.

Ms. Cahill confirmed that she would discuss the setting up of the Working Group with the TWES Section who may set up the group but with the Climate and Biodiversity Action SPC having an input into it.

Item 5: Decarbonisation Zone

In relation to a previous query from Cllr. P. Leonard, Ms. Cahill confirmed that no funding was earmarked in this year's budget for the decarbonisation zone as the Circular had only recently been received from the Department. There is money available in the budget to appoint a consultant to work on the baseline for energy.

It was confirmed that the Energy Master Plan prepared by the SEC would inform the baseline work that would be included in the Implementation Plan. The consultant will carry out a carbon footprint for the town.

Mr. Callery confirmed that the decarbonisation zone will look at all carbon emissions whereas the Energy Master Plan will look at heat and transport initiatives in the town. He confirmed that carbon sequestration would be measured as part of the process.

The Chairman stated that a letter should be sent to the Chief Executive about getting air quality monitors in Arklow.

Mr. J. Callery agreed to forward on a presentation that he made to the Town Team recently to the Members. He stated that the primary focus would be on establishing baselines for emissions within the town and emissions from travel, housing industry and community buildings. The business community and industrial sector would be contacted to explore potential projects which will help with carbon sequestration.

Item 6: To discuss Report received on Climate Action / Energy / Environmental Awareness and Biodiversity

Cllr. L. Scott expressed disappointment that the EV Chargers in Greystones were being delayed. She queried if there was a date for the videos on dog fouling and queried the up to date situation with regard to the website. She referred to a recent report by Faith Wilson and queried how the local biodiversity plans fed into the work of the SPC.

Ms. D. Burns stated that she had not seen a copy of the Faith Wilson report and would be interested in seeing it.

Mr. J. Callery stated that the website was being worked on at present and hoped that it would be completed in the near future. In relation to the dog fouling video, quotes had been received last week with a Dublin Company selected to provide the videos. Solar powered LED signs had also been ordered and were due to be delivered the following day. It was hoped to put one sign in each of the Municipal District areas.

Ms. Carroll confirmed that the website should be completed by August.

In relation to a query from Ms. S. Jackson regarding 84 community groups applying to do local biodiversity plans, Ms. Burns stated that she had helped County Wicklow Partnership in putting together a training programme for community groups. It was felt that this was the best approach as it would empower the groups to do their biodiversity plan instead of appointing an outside consultant to do the plan.

Cllr. P. Leonard referred to the derelict phone boxes in Arklow and a company who was installing EV Chargers. She agreed to send on the details of the Company to the Elected Representatives on the SPC.

Mr. J. Ivory referred to a programme being run by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council who had funding available for biodiversity projects. It was suggested that Wicklow County Council should contact Dun Laoghaire County Council to ascertain where funding was being obtained for such projects.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date: _____