

Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment Strategic Policy Committee
Minutes of Meeting - Thursday 29th June, 2023 in County Hall, Wexford & Remotely

Cathaoirleach: Cllr. Mary Farrell

Present: Cllr. Jim Moore, Cllr. Donal Kenny (Remotely), Cllr. Maura Bell (Remotely), Cllr. Tom Forde, Mr. Danny Forde (PPN Member), Mr. Joe Ryan (Trade Union), Carolyne Godkin Director of Services, Gerry Forde Senior Engineer, Rory O' Mahony Senior Executive Engineer, Hugh Maguire Administrative Officer, Cliona Connolly Environment Education & Awareness Officer, Melissa Goff Senior Staff Officer, Mahon Mc Glynn Assistant Staff Officer.

Apologies: Cllr. Leonard Kelly, Cllr. Oliver Walsh, Ms. Mary B. Walsh (Business & Commercial), Mr. James Brennan (Agriculture), Mr. John Somers (Construction) Mr. Allan Holman (PPN Member), Mr. Kevin Molloy (PPN Member), Mr. Frank Burke and Ms. Catherine Mc Loughlin.

1. Confirmation of Minutes of SPC Meetings held 27th April, 2023

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27th April 2023 were noted and proposed by Cllr. Jim Moore and seconded by Cllr. Maura Bell.

2. Climate Change Update – Gerry Forde

Gerry Forde gave a presentation to the Committee on current matters with regard to Climate Change which featured;

- Details of the new Climate Action Co-Ordinator and the Climate Action Officer.
- Key Milestones achieved to date and those still to be completed in preparation of the Draft Climate Action Plan (Draft LACAP).
- Details of the Stakeholder engagement undertaken by the Climate Action Team.
- Climate Action Training undertaken by Staff and Elected Members.
- Increase in the number of Performance Indicators from 5 in 2021 to 16 in 2022.
- Details of some current projects including the Climate Action Expo in County Hall on 1st June, 2023.
- Successful Surveillance Audit for ISO 50001 for the Energy Team.

Following the presentation there were some queries raised by Members of the Committee and responses given by the relevant staff present. The main topics discussed included.

- The 100 million trees "pocket forest" project promoted nationally by David and Richard Mulcahy. A number of locations in the County have been planted using the "Miyawaki" method that leads to up to 10 times faster growing trees and a greater range of biodiversity. Concern was expressed about some companies that might be off-setting high levels of carbon emissions by sponsoring similar tree planting projects etc.
- The need to improve the Climate Action Training among the elected members was briefly discussed.

3. Draft Report of the Litter and Waste Action Sub-Committee

A report was distributed to the SPC Committee Members and Hugh Maguire briefed the Committee on the Draft Report for the Litter and Waste Action Sub-Committee. The Report covered the following items;

- The Membership of the Sub-Committee.
- Outline of the Sub-Committee Formation.
- The Terms of Reference.
- Summary of the matters discussed at the meetings.
- Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee.

After the outline of the Draft Report the SPC Members had some queries to which responses were given by the relevant staff present. The following matters were raised;

- If the main types of litter had changed since COVID-19 and had abated and the response was that masks and other COVID-19 related litter had greatly diminished in recent months.
- There was a discussion on dog fouling and the fact that many dog owners are cleaning up after their dogs. A minority of dog owners are still causing problems for communities by not cleaning up after the dogs or leaving poo bags behind in gardens or hanging from trees etc. It was suggested that some Warden Patrols be carried outside business hours to monitor for dog fouling and convenience food related litter. There was a brief discussion on the placement of dog bins.
- It was noted that new Beach Bye-Law signs are being erected at the Blue Flag and Green Coast Beaches. A suggestion was made to erect more "Leave No Trace Bring your Litter Home – Thank You" signage at beaches and scenic areas.
- There was brief discussion on the Draft National Circular Waste Economy Plan – a briefing for the Council having been held on 8th June, 2023. The closing date for submissions is 5th July, 2023.

4. KIMO Conference May 2023 Denmark – Councillor Jim Moore.

Councillor Jim Moore and Captain Phil Murphy, Senior Marine Officer, Wexford County Council attended the KIMO Conference held in Vordingborg Denmark in May, 2023. Councillor Jim Moore gave a brief presentation to the SPC Committee outlining the main conference themes and a presentation by Wexford County Council;

- KIMO is a network of local governments working together for healthy seas, clean beaches and thriving coastal communities. It has 80 members in 8 countries including Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, UK, Sweden, Norway, the Faro Islands, Germany Ireland and Lithuania. Wexford County Council is the only Irish Member.
- KIMO as an organisation seeks to influence Strategy, Legislation and Policy with regard to Maritime Matters.
- Various themes featured at the conference such as UN Sustainable Development Goals, Plastics Treaty, High Seas Treaty to EU Directives, Regional Co-operation to National Legislation and Action Plans to Implementation Guidance and Best Practice.
- Some of the topics for discussion included EU Consultation on Directives, Strategy Framework for microplastics study, EU Joint workshops on ocean governance, Fishing for Litter Presentation and Regional Sea Conventions (OSPAR & HELCOM).
- Issues relevant to County Wexford included mass balloon releases, confetti, plastic pellet pollution, eutrophication and agricultural run-off, marking fishing gear and container loss at sea.

- Wexford County Council representatives gave presentations on Fishing for Litter Project (2018 -6.75T collected in KQ 2020 -18T collected), Coastal Erosion, Lobster Pot Recycling and Sea Grass cultivation to sequester carbon against Climate Change.
- The next International meeting of KIMO is planned for October, 2023.

There followed some questions and queries from the Committee Members to which answers were provided;

- While the menace of plastic pollution in marine waters was noted difficulties in recycling plastic fishing nets were highlighted.
- The Committee Members were pleased to see the awareness of Sea Grass being raised at KIMO as previously highlighted by Coastwatch at an SPC Meeting.
- It was agreed to continue with KIMO Membership and to offer to host a future meeting in Wexford. This was proposed by Joe Ryan and seconded by Danny Forde.
- It was noted that Litter Picking Tools and Green Clean Up Bags used by Community Groups assisted by Wexford County Council are made from recycled plastic and in particular some of the Litter Picking Tools are made from recycled fishing nets.

5. Beaches Update – Gerry Forde

- It was noted that the Beach Season got off to a busy start with a spell of fine weather. The Beach Lifeguards, Beach Wardens and Litter Patrol Staff are all in place together with Bathing Water Quality Sampling and Beach Cleaning. Environment Clean Up Crew Patrols and Local Link Buses are also at some Beaches.
- The main issues of concern at the main Beaches are barbecues, campfires, camping, traffic issues, illegal trading, Jet skis, dogs and horses and maintaining good Bathing Water Quality
- It was noted that the ecological assessment of proposed Coastal Protection works at Seaview indicate that the Part 8 Planning Process can be used.

Following the update the Committee Members had some queries to which responses were given by the relevant staff at the Meeting;

- Concern was expressed about the danger of fires at Beaches in the County and the need to have a contingency plan to cope with such an eventuality.
- A query was raised about the need for further planting of Marram Grass on the dunes at Morriscastle Beach. Cliona Connolly said this could be carried out the following March, the time for such planting.

6. Any Other Business

The Committee Members raised a number of queries which were discussed and responded to on the following matters;

- The subject of the Irish Geographers National Conference held at Whites' Hotel, Wexford in May. It featured 4-5 days with over 350 papers presented by some of Ireland's leading academics in the field. Some of the Committee Members were disappointed with the level of attendance and the lack of Awareness of the event.
- It was noted that an open invitation to part of the Conference held on Tuesday 16th May, 2023 (Evening) entitled "Climate, Landscape and Community, Building Resilience Across Wexford" was sent to the CCBDENV SPC Members.
- Some of the Council's Technical Staff participated in the Conference.

A provisional date was set for the next SPC Meeting of Thursday 14th September, 2023 at 14.30.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Signed: _____


Cathaoirleach

Date: _____

14th Sept 2023.

