

**Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment Strategic Policy Committee**  
**Minutes of Meeting – Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025, 9.30am**  
**Council Chamber, Wexford County Council, Wexford.**

**Cathaoirleach:** Cllr. Barbara Anne Murphy

**Present (Committee):** Cllr. Barbara Anne Murphy, Cllr. Lisa McDonald, Cllr. Catherine Walsh, Cllr. Pat Kehoe, Jer O'Mahony (Agriculture), Natasha Ariff (PPN), Cathy Lee (PPN)

**Staff:** Brendan Cooney (Senior Executive Scientist), Abraham Dunne (Senior Engineer), Eoin Kinsella (Agricultural Scientist), Enda Brennan (Executive Engineer), Aidan Bates (Marine Officer), Rory O'Mahony (Senior Executive Engineer), Melissa Goff (Senior Staff Officer), Nichola Gahan (Clerical Officer), Hugh Maguire (Administrative Officer)

**Remotely:** Cllr. Aidan Browne, Joe Ryan (Wexford Council of Trade Unions),

Frank Burke (Climate Action Co-Ordinator)

**Apologies:** Cllr. Vicky Barron, Eamonn Hore (Director of Services).

**1. Confirmation of Minutes of SPC Meeting held 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025.**

The Minutes of the Meeting held 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025 were proposed by Cllr. Lisa McDonald and were seconded by Cllr. Catherine Walsh.

Natasha Ariff noted that the most recent minutes that she was able to find on the Council's website, were those for 2023. She requested that in future, minutes should be made available online after they have been adopted.

**2. SPC Annual Work Programme 2026**

Hugh Maguire introduced the Wexford County Council Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment SPC Draft Programme of Works for 2026. He advised that should people require an item added to the agenda for future meetings two weeks' notice would be required. Hugh advised that the draft work programme was a working document and that Committee Members were welcome to make suggestions.

The presentation covered some possible items for the Work Programme.

- The increase in requests for beach trading licences.
- The adding of the rural water well schemes and grants under the Environment Section umbrella.
- Whether waste presentation Bye-Laws needed to be updated.
- The importance of keeping members updated in respect of animal control services/pound.
- The addition of walking trails and the resulting increase in visitors.
- The pending National Report regarding election posters.
- The focus of water quality in our rivers and lakes.
- RMCEI inspections
- Blue Flag beaches and the effect bad weather has on bathing water quality

Natasha Ariff suggested that water quality update should be on every SPC agenda and discussed at every meeting going forward due to its importance. Cllr. Barbara Ann Murphy agreed and stated that it should be reported more regularly and can be added to the agenda as a short item.

### **3. Coastal Matters Update**

Enda Brennan provided a brief update regarding ongoing coastal works, during his presentation he confirmed the following:

- Seaview Coastal Protection Project is in its final stages.
- Rosslare Coastal Erosion Flood Relief Scheme public participation day is expected to be held in March 2026.
- Applications for Blue Flag to be submitted by December 5<sup>th</sup>.
- A consultant had been appointed in respect of the Ballyhack/Passage East project.
- The walking trail for Cahore Beach South was installed in October
- Public Consultation meeting planned for Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December in respect of the Cahore Beach North Rock Armour Enhancement project

A discussion ensued regarding water quality and testing.

Cllr. Lisa McDonald pointed out that although people were now swimming all year around, the water quality was not being tested all year round. She suggested that the Committee should look at incorporating that in the programme. Natasha Ariff voiced her support for this suggestion and mentioned that testing of bathing water quality could also be carried out on our rivers and lakes. She queried if there was an overall coastal management plan and monitoring of coastal erosion for Co. Wexford.

Abraham Dunne confirmed that although the EPA didn't require testing all year round the matter would be considered but that there would be cost implications. Enda Brennan followed this by advising that the OPW were looking at launching a monitoring programme for the county and coastline in early 2026.

Cllr. Barbara Ann Murphy queried why Ballymoney Beach had lost its Blue Flag status. Enda Brennan confirmed that it hadn't met An Taisce Blue Flag criteria. He stated that the Water Team would be investigating the area around it and further upstream. Abraham Dunne advised that the Team would check out the testing of the streams at Ballymoney.

Cllr. Catherine Walsh asked if the water in Wexford Harbour was quality checked. Brendan Cooney confirmed that it was monitored as it was a shellfish water area. He also stated that the water treatment plant in Kerlogue was UV treated. Frank Burke told the Committee that he had been talking to Georgia Southern University representatives about a pilot scheme project to get real time water quality results but that it was still in the very early stages.

Brendan Cooney pointed out that Ireland would probably be the only country in Europe to have an extended bathing season if it was to proceed. He advised that part of the problem for the high bacterial load in rivers was due to farming, septic tanks and municipal waste water. He went on to confirm that septic tanks caused huge problems with some catchment areas having 90% failure rates. He told the Committee that more elevated bacterial loads occurred in rivers in winter which would therefore cause a large number of failures in bathing water if tested in winter which may subsequently affect the Blue Flag status for Beaches.

Natasha Ariff stated that the reason for testing bathing water was to protect people and that we were now saying that it was ok to swim in winter as testing was not being carried out. Cllr. Lisa McDonald pointed out that although the directive was to test between 1 June – 15 September, we didn't have to stick to these dates.

Hugh Maguire confirmed that Bathing Water Regulations required the Council to monitor 8 designated bathing water locations based on the large amount of people using these areas during the busiest bathing season (Summer season). He advised that in Co. Wexford the number of lakes where people swam was much less than other counties. Natasha Ariff suggested that information signs should be put in place to explain to people that the water was not being tested and that they may be at risk.

#### **4. Climate Action Update**

Frank Burke guided the Committee through the statistics and KPI's from the Climate Action Team Report and spoke about the following areas.

- The disappointingly low attendance at the recent Gorey Energy Event.
- The free over 55's Climate Course being held in Enniscorthy in 2026.
- The many applications being received for the Community Climate Action Programme
- The Biodiversity Action Plan and what was currently being prepared.
- The Pathfinder Project and the retrofit of the Apex swimming pool.

Frank Burke, Natasha Arriff, Cllr. Catherine Walsh & Cllr. Lisa McDonald had a discussion regarding ways to encourage people to attend seminars and avail of the grants available. They also discussed surveying seminar attendees to get their feedback and the retrofitting of old buildings/heritage energy clinic.

#### **5. Report on Public Consultation for use of CCTV**

Hugh Maguire went through the Report on Public Consultation relating to the use of CCTV. He advised the Committee of the following:

- There was public support for LA's using CCTV for waste enforcement purposes  
6 submissions in total were received all in favour of CCTV v use.
- Each LA had to set up an Oversight Board to review CCTV use
- The chosen sites were ones for which the Council had received many complaints.
- CCTV may be in place early in 2026 – CCTV contractors need to be recruited.

#### **6. NEPs Report 2024**

Rory O'Mahony went through the delivery of the National Enforcement Priorities and Wexford County Councils performance 2022-2024.

- The statistics provided are based on reports that Wexford Co. Council submit annually to the EPA.
- Wexford County Council's performance is improving every year, with the objective going forward being to move from moderate scores up to top scores.

- Currently focusing on preparing the NEP reports in the format the EPA required.
- Some LA's have fallen back which may be due to resourcing issues.
- Noise Performance plan was adopted last year and progress had been made. We have a dedicated inspector is working on enforcement and there should be improved statistics for next year.

## 7. Lady's Island Lake Update

Brendan Cooney provided an update regarding the ongoing issues at Lady's Island Lake which has been in the news in recent months. He confirmed that the business case had been accepted by the Department and he went through the costings and staffing. Brendan told the Committee that the terms of reference were currently being drafted and that a Steering Committee would be set up. He followed this by advising that the Agricultural Scientist and Clerical Officer will be appointed to carry out the day to day running of the project. Brendan mentioned that HR had been notified that the matter needed to be expedited and that we would be looking at March/April 2026 before staffing will be in place and ready to go.

Cllr. Pat Kehoe asked about the failure rate was in respect of the septic tank inspections and how many landowners were feeding into it. Eoin Kinsella confirmed that there had been 15 non-compliances out of 22 inspections, that the catchment area was approximately 6.5 thousand acres and that 4,734 acres were draining into the lake. Cllr. Kehoe stated that it was important to let the general public know that the pollution problems in the Lake are not all due to agricultural sources.

## 8. Any Other Business

There were no matters discussed.

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

**THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.**

Signed:

  
Cathaoirleach

Date:

30/1/2026