

Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment Strategic Policy Committee
Minutes of Meeting – Friday 30th January, 9.30am
Council Chamber.

Cathaoirleach: Cllr. Barbara Anne Murphy

Present: Cllr. Barbara Anne Murphy, Cllr. Lisa McDonald, Jer O'Mahony (Agriculture), Natasha Ariff (PPN), Cathy Lee (PPN)

Staff: Eamonn Hore (Director of Services), Eoin Kinsella (Agricultural Scientist), Enda Brennan (Executive Engineer), Aidan Bates (Marine Officer), Rory O'Mahony (Senior Executive Engineer), Cliona Connolly (Environment Awareness Officer), Hugh Maguire (Administrative Officer), Nichola Gahan (Clerical Officer).

Remotely: Cllr. Catherine Walsh, Cllr. Pat Kehoe,

Staff: Claire Kelly, Melissa Goff, Helen Lawlor-Coulet.

Apologies: Cllr. Vicky Barron, Joe Ryan (WCTU).

1. Confirmation of Minutes of SPC Meeting held 28th November 2025.

The Minutes of the Meeting held 28th November 2025 were proposed by Cllr. Lisa McDonald and were seconded by Cllr. Pat Kehoe.

There was a query regarding a cost breakdown of the Lady's Island Lake Project, could it be included in the Minutes, it was suggested that the breakdown could be provided in the monthly Chief Executive's Report or an update Report to the SPC.

2. Environment Education & Awareness Programme 2026

Cliona Connolly introduced the Environment Education & Awareness Programme 2026. She advised that much of her work was based on the new National Waste Management Plan 2024-2030 which sets out a framework for the prevention and management of waste in Ireland.

The presentation covered the following areas:

- Focus & targets for areas like better waste segregation.
- Plans to focus on single use plastics, textiles and food waste prevention.
- Supporting community groups to engage in swap resources activities.
- Ireland is the 2nd highest country regarding post-consumer textile waste per head of population in Europe.
- The launch of circular cups project for community events, the importance of the drying & washing of these items and funding of a washer for same.
- Loaning of reusable party packs to community groups, sports clubs etc., whereby feedback will be given from these groups.
- The cloth nappy incentive scheme – 50 families are going to trial this.
- Trees for Wexford – 148 groups applied and 10,000 trees/saplings to be given out.

- Progression of the Environment Awards
- Green Schools programme & Picker Pals programme which is hugely successful with over 4,400 children participating between 2000-2024.
- Rubbish Film Festival for Secondary School Transition Year.
- Bag it Bin it – anti dog fouling education programme which is linked to the National Curriculum.
- Free electrical recycling days – Wexford is ahead of the average with regards to E Waste.
- Tidy Towns adjudicator engaged to work with communities that were close to winning a medal.

After the presentation the following were discussed:

- Cllr. Lisa McDonald asked Cliona Connolly to assist the Rosslare Strand Tidy Towns Committee with advice and to improve their performance in Ireland's Best Kept Small Town Competition.
- Natasha Arriff queried if something similar to the Killarney Coffee Cup Project could be implemented in some of our towns. Cliona advised that it had been looked at before Covid, that it took a huge amount of resources and that it would only work if all businesses agreed to be involved in the project.
- A query was raised about the subject of dog fouling bins. Cliona advised that the majority of owners were responsible but that others just throw them on the ground even when a bin is nearby. She highlighted the Council's Green Dog Walker campaign.
- Cathy Lee spoke about the overflowing clothing banks and queried how many textile facilities Wexford County Council had in the county and specific towns. Cliona confirmed that Wexford County Council have 8 textile recycling bins and that Holmestown took all textiles which were then sorted once the bins were emptied. She continued by saying that others were private which caused a huge problem when they were overflowing.

There was a discussion on the matter of textile recycling bins and problems with overflowing bins. It was noted that Wexford County Council removed some of the textile recycling bins from TESCO Sites which improved the tidiness of the sites. It was suggested that the Council contact the textile recycling bin operators on a regular basis to ensure the bins are regularly emptied.

3. Coastal Matters Update

Enda Brennan gave a summary update regarding Coastal Matters such as Rosslare Coastal Protection and Flooding Relief Scheme. The following items were raised/discussed.

- Natasha Ariff queried whether there was any dune restoration works being carried out by Wexford County Council. Cliona Connolly discussed the planting of marram grass and chestnut fencing in Curracløe and how successful it was at keeping people off the dunes. Claire Kelly advised that they had applied for biodiversity funding regarding same.
- Jer O'Mahony, Enda Brennan & Eamonn Hore had a brief discussion with regards to Flooding at Great Island.

4. Climate Action Update

Claire Kelly presented the Committee with an update report on Climate Action and discussed the progress that was being made. She detailed the following –

- While a recent Gorey Energy Event had a disappointing turnout it did lead to one of the attendees running a similar event in Riverchapel which was well attended.
- Eco-Drive Training was carried out before Christmas for Council drivers.
- Client Connect Project.
- Over 55's Free Climate Course in Enniscorthy Library which was being held to make the area of climate change more understandable for people.
- Community Climate Action Programme, applications & funding.
- Pathfinder programme which assists with meeting goals on building emissions
- Upgrades in Wexford Arts Centre and Kilmore Quay.
- Christmas energy shutdown, the results being an improvement on the 2024 figures.
- Final edits being carried out on draft Biodiversity Plan which will go on display in February 2026 for 6 weeks with public consultation event being held during this time.

Natasha Arriff raised a query with regards to SEA screening for the Council's Biodiversity Plan whereby Claire confirmed that she would look into the matter and get back to her.

5. Litter Management Report 2024-2025

Hugh Maguire briefed the Committee on the Litter Management Report 2024-2025. The following areas were reported on.

- NLMPs Survey results 2004 – 2024 for Co. Wexford, showing how littered the County is and the makeup of the litter found with packaging being the biggest item.
- IBAL results 2025 where Wexford was found to be cleaner than European norms and finished 10th out of 40.
- Wexford County Council Corporate Plan 2025-2029, how litter management fits into this and therefore fits into the National Plan.
- 44 Actions in the Litter Management plan under 5 main Headings.
- Importance of environmental awareness programmes e.g. Green Schools programme and school visits to Holmestown and community involvement e.g. Tidy Towns.
- Successful cleanup of some black spot areas.
- Implementation of CCTV – 6 sites coming on stream in Q1 2026.
- Looking at furniture amnesties and fashion initiatives.

The matter was noted by the Committee.

6. KIMO Matters

Mick Mahon advised the Committee that KIMO was an international environmental organisation representing local authorities. He discussed the following:

- Upcoming event at Ferrycarrig Hotel where he was due to give a presentation.
- Cork, Wicklow and Dun Laoghaire's interest in becoming members which may strengthen Wexford County Councils involvement.

Cllr. Lisa McDonald noted that the clean up's, projects and studies in which KIMO take part showed a lot of collaboration with the EU & funding and that Wexford County Council should take advantage of this. Cllr. McDonald suggested that a member of the SPC Committee attend the next KIMO Conference which was going to be held in Gothenburg in May 2026. This was proposed by Cllr. Barbara Anne Murphy and seconded by Jer O'Mahony. Councillor Mc Donald was the nominated representative

7. Lady's Island Lake Update & Water Quality Matters

Eoin Kinsella provided the Committee with an update regarding Lady's Island Lake & Water Quality Matters. The presentation covered the following areas:

- Business case has been accepted by the Dept. of Housing, Local Government & Heritage.
- Senior Exec. & Clerical Officer will be appointed to carry out day to day running of the project – appointment should be in March/April 2026.
- NIP Inspections - 30 carried out, 18 fails and 12 passes with 60 planned for 2026 subject to resources, weather and ground conditions.
- NAIP Inspections – 33 carried out with 18 compliant and 12 non-compliant, clean water diversion is main reason for non-compliance.
- Water sampling was carried out 3 times in 2025 and 13 feeder streams to be monitored over 2026.
- Septic tank grants, how they were not paid up front and the fact that some people had to get bridging loans to have the work done.

At the end of the presentation there was a discussion regarding EIP funding, what penalties were in place when an inspection failed and how farmers were going to be incentivised to stop polluting. It was stated that the Agricultural Scientist would be acting as an advisor and that it was a good time to have an advisor full time on the ground in that catchment area.

Cllr. Lisa McDonald queried whether the Committee should put a motion forward to request that septic tank grants should be paid similar to the vacant home grant. She suggested that the Government be asked to change the current septic tank grant scheme to enable people get works done in advance of expenditure. Hugh Maguire informed that there was a quick turnaround with payments of septic tank grants but that the Committee could look at this issue at the next meeting.

Jer O'Mahony advised the Committee that there was going to be a Natura Plan for Lady's Island which was going to be funded by the Wexford Leader with a meeting being held at Lady's Island in February. He continued by informing the Committee that for the past 2 years he had been involved in the development of The Arable Coastal Scheme which would develop new ways to support farmland wildlife like the Hen Harrier. He finished by stating that the announcement of a new €7 million project would be made within the next few weeks.

8. Any Other Business

A discussion ensued between Committee Members concerning Storm Chandra with Natasha Ariff suggesting the introduction of an early warning flood systems and sensors. Cllr. Barbara Anne Murphy observed that it would be more useful to get river catchment alerts. Eamonn Hore advised that there had been work carried out on an early warning system but that it was a very complex process. He continued by confirming that the Enniscorthy Flood Scheme would take a long time due to environmental concerns and that no matter what nature-based solutions were put in place it was also going to need some form of hard engineering solutions.

Eamonn stated that there was a number of interim measures that could be implemented while planning for the scheme. There was a brief discussion regarding hydro-metric measuring. Natasha Ariff then discussed the use of farmland as sponges for seasonal flooding and compensating the farmers for same. Natasha advised that Professor Mary Bourke (Trinity College expert on Flood Management) was willing to come and talk to the Committee and give a presentation and requested that it be put on the agenda for the next SPC meeting. Claire Kelly mentioned that there was a pilot project in Fethard called "Slow the Flow", which leaves some of the land to flood naturally.

The next meeting was provisionally scheduled for Friday 27th March 2026.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Signed: _____

Cathaoirleach

Date: _____

April 2nd 2026

