

# Climate Action Pre-Draft Consultation Stakeholder Engagement Report

October 2023



## Introduction

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 requires Ireland to reduce its carbon emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The function of this Act is to facilitate the transition to a “climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy,” with a target of 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

All Local Authorities are required to develop a five year Climate Action Plan from 2024 to 2029. The plan will include mitigation and adaptation measures and outlines how Wexford County Council will meet its own organisational obligations to lower emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. It will also influence and facilitate businesses, citizens and communities to help them reduce their emissions.

When adopted in February 2024, the Wexford County Council Climate Action plan will replace the current Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024.

As part of the establishment of baseline data for the Draft Climate Action Plan, the Climate Action Team engaged with a wide range of stakeholders both internally and externally.

The development of the Climate Action Plan has benefited greatly from the responses received throughout this process.



**Fig 1.1 ‘Word cloud’ displaying range of locations of our online survey respondents**

## Methodology

A broad spectrum of engagement activities was undertaken in the development of the Draft Wexford County Council Climate Action Plan and in the promotion of the forthcoming Community Climate Action Programme. This was carried out to maximise the Climate Action Team’s outreach to all stakeholders. It is estimated that approx. 172.55 hours of face-to-face engagement opportunities were created, together with a range of online opportunities. The activities included:

- Meetings with the elected members
- Meetings, workshops and other communication with council staff

- Information and Feedback Sessions with secondary school students - every secondary school in Wexford was invited to participate.
- A Climate Action Event which included a day of presentations with experts from various climate related fields
- Online survey to assess the climate action priorities for the people of Wexford
- Open call for Pre-Consultation submissions/expressions of interest via Wexford County Council's Online Portal
- Public meetings, information sessions, seminars.
- Council meetings
- Newsletter
- Advertising/PR activities including print advertising, radio interview, social media posts and direct emails.

This report will provide more detail on the above activity.

### Stakeholder Engagement Key Findings

- All aspects of the climate action plan are important to the people of Wexford.
- There is a strong willingness on behalf of individuals, businesses and farmers to look at their activities and make positive changes.
- There is an eagerness for tree planting, growing your own and care for ecosystems.
- Finance is a significant barrier in making changes.
- There is concern about protecting food production in the face of alternative fuel production.
- Cycling would be embraced much more widely but there is a significant level of worry about safety on the roads.
- The young people of Wexford are very well informed and engaged with key aspects of climate action within their communities and the wider world.

## Development of Wexford County Council Climate Actions

Stakeholder engagement began in April 2023 with a briefing to the Executive Management Team and the Elected Members of the Council, along with a presentation to the Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment Strategic Policy Committee outlining the requirement to develop the Draft Climate Action Plan, including the process and timelines involved.

One of the essential elements of the Climate Action Plan are the actions that each department/section of the council will undertake in order to address its own environmental impact and emissions. The Climate Action Team engaged with the Senior Management team and each Department, through meetings and workshops, to develop actions for the Draft Plan. Sections identified areas for improvement and produced actions to be undertaken over the life of the action plan. You can review the agreed actions in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of the Draft Climate Action Plan.

The Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment Strategic Policy Committee discussed the progress of the Draft Climate Action Plan (DCAP) at all meetings and reviewed the Climate actions. Updates on DCAP process was provided through the Chief Executive Monthly Reports. Engagement sessions took place with the Elected Members in April (overview of the plan) and September (review of actions). Engagement with internal teams continued and challenges facing the County in terms of climate adaptation and mitigation were considered. The Draft plan, subject to agreement by the Elected Members, goes for public consultation from October 10<sup>th</sup> to November 21<sup>st</sup>.

## Internal Stakeholder Process

The development (and implementation) of the climate action plan involves dedicated working groups with the input of local authority resources which have been assigned to develop the plan. This is supported by strong leadership, commitment, and accountability by the organisation. Input was received from the following Service Areas at both the advance planning stage and during the statutory plan making process.

- Corporate,
- Community Development,
- Economic Development,
- IT,
- Environment,
- Water Services,
- Planning,
- Housing,
- Finance,
- Area Offices (Municipal Districts),
- Roads/Transportation,
- Heritage,
- Biodiversity,
- Facilities,
- Libraries,
- Arts and Culture,
- Fire & Emergency Services

## Citizen Stakeholder Engagement

### Online Survey

The survey was conducted during May and June, 2023 and could be accessed via Council Tweets or from Wexford County Councils website.

A small number of survey paper copies were made available at Climate Action Events to maximise the accessibility of the survey.

The survey was advertised in the Wexford People newspaper, on council social media, on local radio and via direct email to PPN and other interested parties.

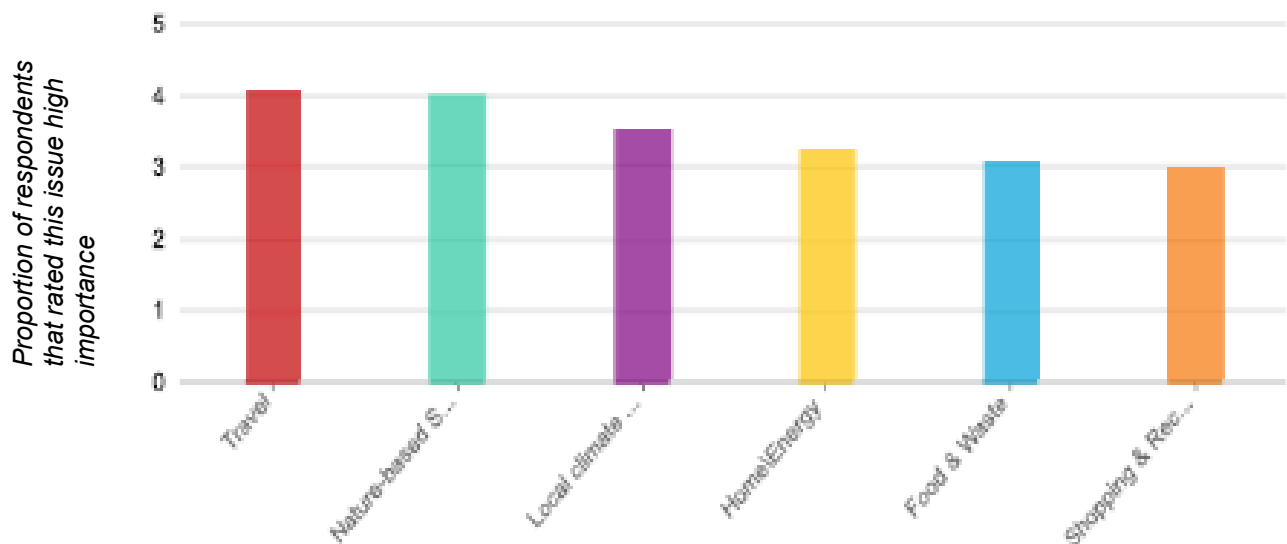
153 responses were received from the online survey.

There was also an opportunity for longer submissions via email to the climate action team. Two responses were received.

### Data Collected from Online Survey

It is clear from the results, that all climate action themes listed in the survey are of similar importance to the people Wexford. The differences in each area are small, though there is a particular interest in alternative travel and nature-based solutions.

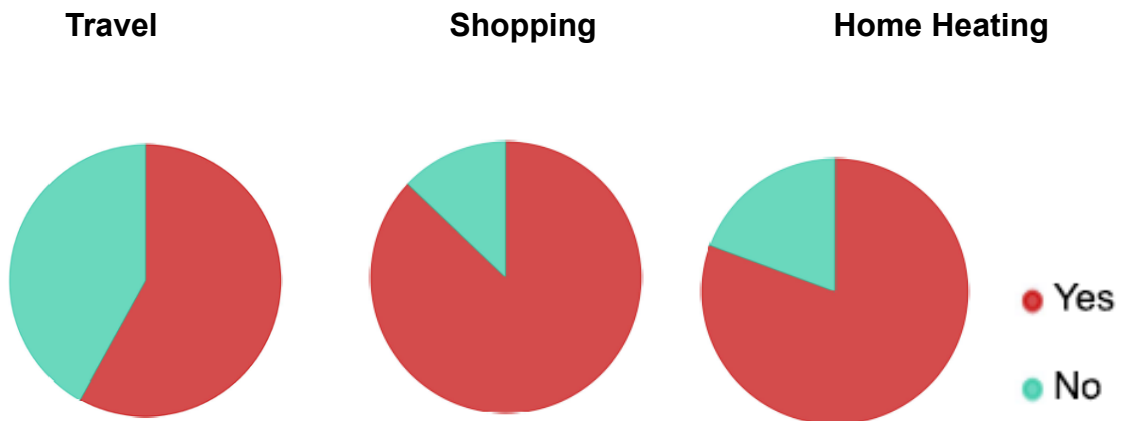
**Select the following Climate themes in order of importance to you:**



**Fig 1.2: Climate Theme Survey results**

A series of questions were asked in each category to assess the willingness of respondents to change their own behaviour in relation to climate issues. It was found that there is a significant willingness to engage with change in their own lives, particularly where the right services, resources and incentives are in place.

Would you consider changing your habits in the following areas to take climate action?



**Fig 1.3: Change of Habitat Survey results**

The results of the survey indicate that there is a high level of enthusiasm for nature-based climate action across the county.



**Fig 1.4 Word cloud of the language respondents used regarding nature based solutions**

## Wexford Secondary Schools Engagement

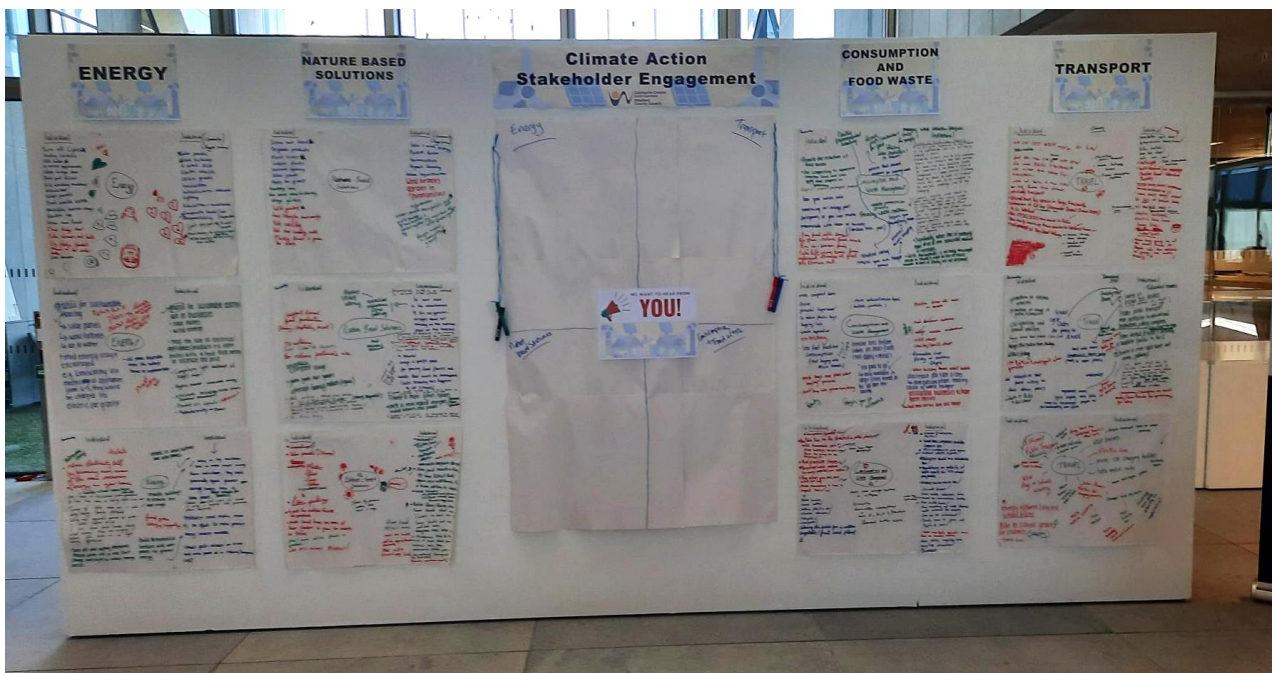
An invitation was sent to all Secondary Schools in County Wexford. The schools that were available to participate were:

Enniscorthy (10 <sup>th</sup> May)	Meánscoil Gorman FCJ Bunclody
Wexford Town (11 <sup>th</sup> May)	Loreto Wexford Presentation Wexford Selskar College
Gorey Schools (16 <sup>th</sup> May)	Creagh College Gorey Educate Together
New Ross (17 <sup>th</sup> May)	Our Lady of Lourdes

The students were very well informed about the issues of Climate Change and clearly had been educated in different approaches on issues like rewilding, energy, recycling, the origin of clothes and 'fast fashion'. They brought real insight and made a very valuable contribution to the process.

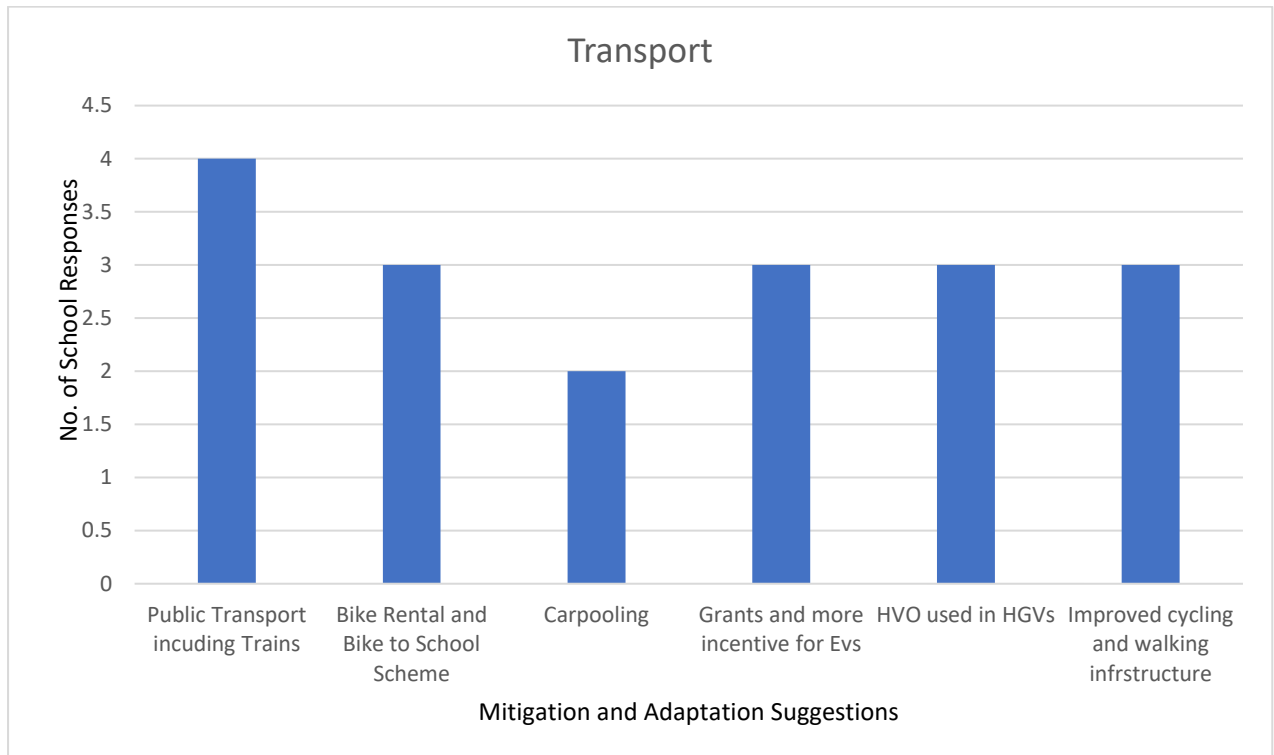
A modified Global Café format was employed for this consultation. The students identified climate priorities. Meta-analysis was then completed, to collate the input and responses from all the sessions into the results below.

The consultation was broken up into themes on Transport, Energy, Nature based solutions and consumption and waste management.



*Display of the responses of the Secondary School Students at Climate Action Day.*

## Transport Theme



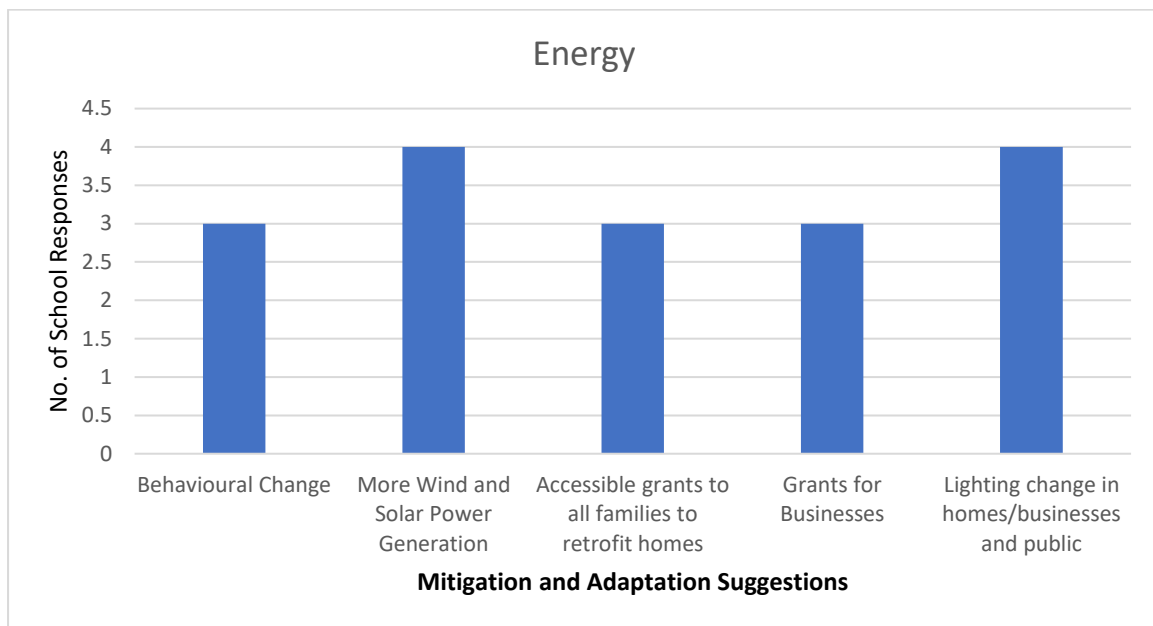
**Fig 1.5 Transport results for all the schools**

Recurring issues in relation to travel from all the schools are as follows:

- Issues surrounding public transport reappeared continuously. The students shared their own first-hand experiences with buses not arriving, a limited timetable of journeys, awkward, inefficient bus routes and high costs for young people.
- Most students were driven by privately owned cars, with very few getting the bus and even fewer walking or cycling.
- The need to make cycling safe for students in towns and rural areas was emphasised in most schools' responses regarding transport.



## Energy Theme

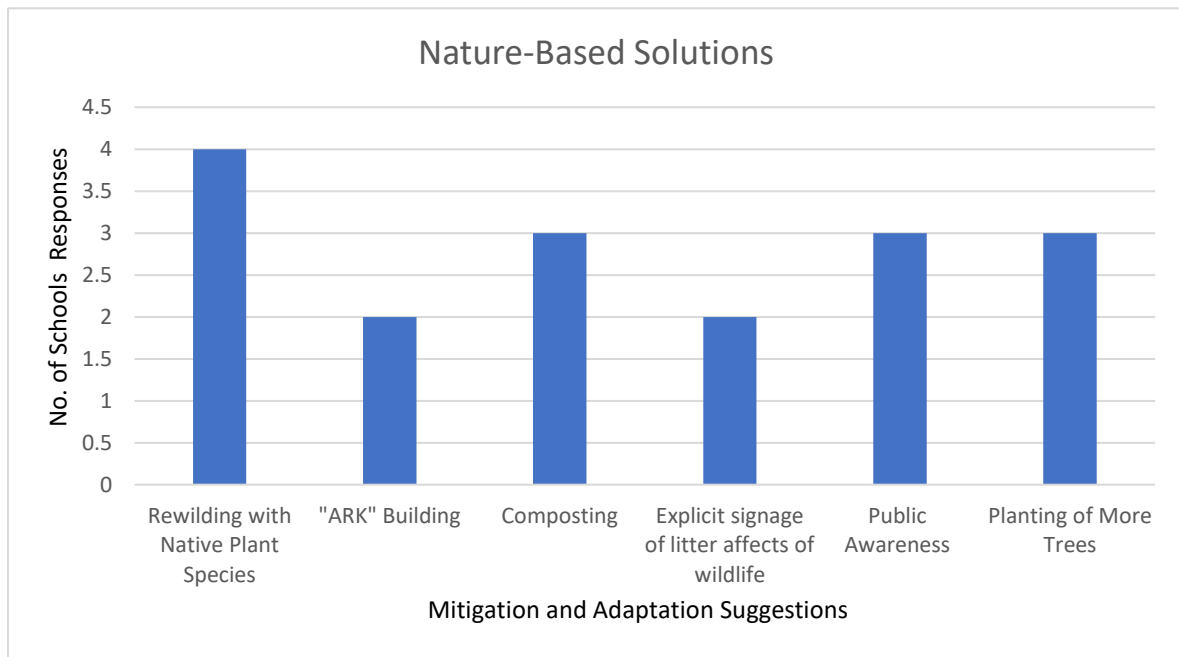


**Figure 1.6: Graph displaying the feedback on energy.**

The recurring issues from all the Secondary Schools relating to the Energy Theme were:

- Individual behavioural change within the home
- Support and investment in changing energy sources (go to renewables on large and small scales)
- Change lighting in public buildings, business and at home
- There is a 'corporate social responsibility' on business, industry, agriculture and government to take all the steps possible to care for the environment and the future of the planet.
- Cost of energy upgrades are too costly for many.
- Funding and supports should be available for everyone.

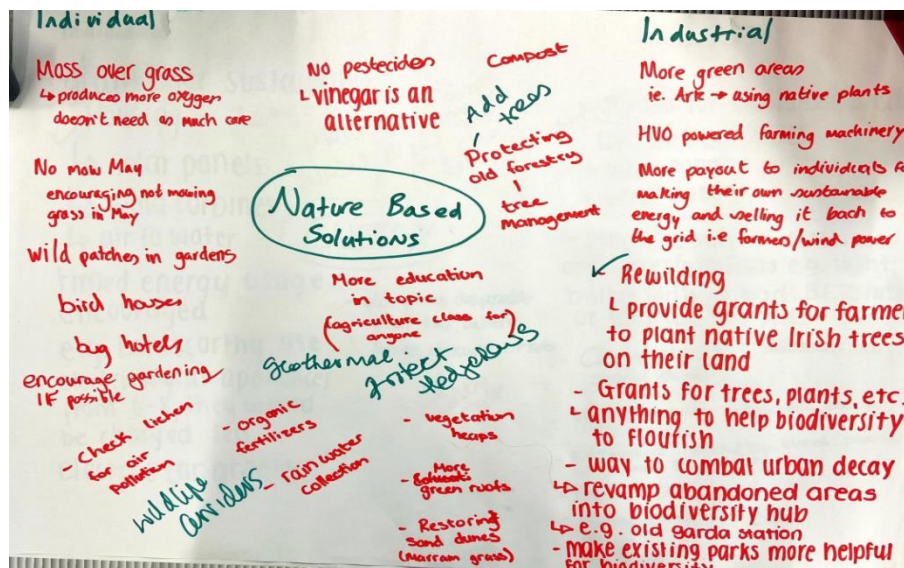
## Nature – Based Solutions Theme



**Figure 1.7: Graph representing Nature-Based Solutions responses.**

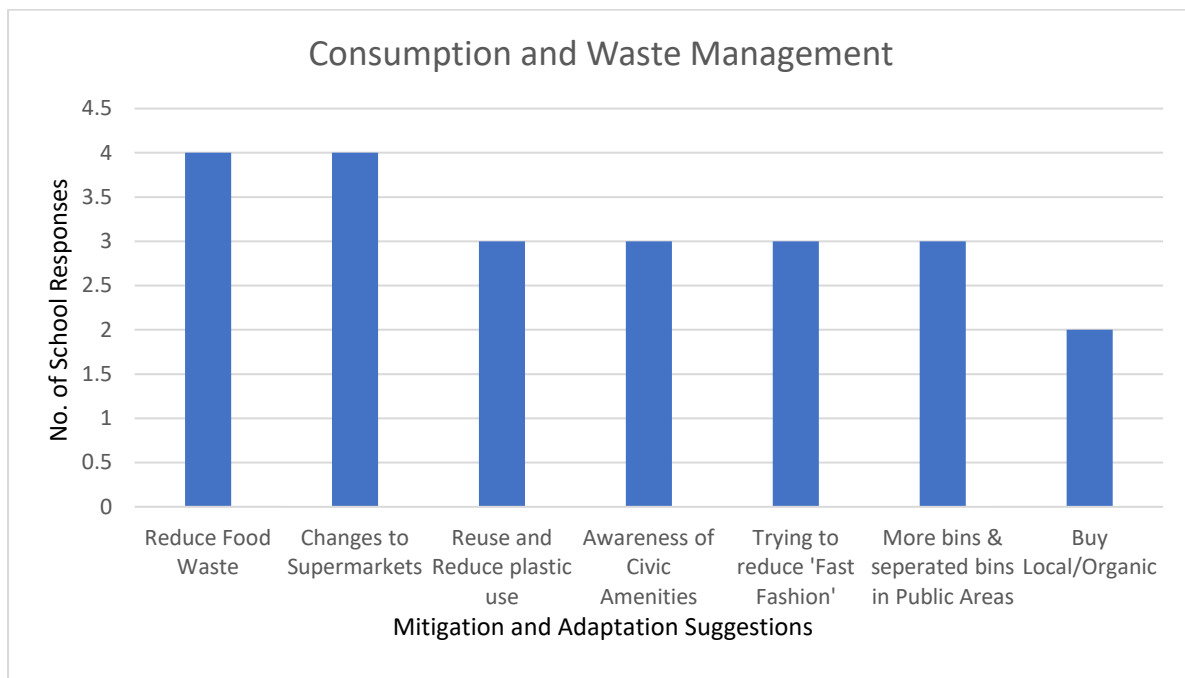
The recurring issues from all the Secondary Schools relating to the Nature – Based Solutions theme were:

- Rewilding, with an emphasis on nature based solutions.
- It was suggested that grants for farmers to leave area's wild, protect hedgerows and minimise use of chemicals on the land would be beneficial.
- Protection of existing habitats.



*A1 Sheet of the Wexford town schools' participation on the theme of Nature-Based Solutions*

## Consumption and waste management theme



**Figure 1.8: Graph representing Consumption and Waste Management.**

Recurring issues in relation to consumption and waste management are as follows:

- Food waste on both an individual and industrial level was heavily emphasised by students when asked for strategies in the Consumption and Waste Management sector.
- The students and their teachers pointed out that there is a greater emphasis put on recycling, rather than reducing and reusing.
- The issue surrounding the consumption of “Fast Fashion” was another frequent concern raised by the students.
- Only a small number of students were aware of the Civic Amenities Centres and their role in the community.

## Climate Action Day 1 June 2023

The day was well attended over the four sessions. The following were the list of speakers on the day:

### **Agriculture Panel**

- Cllr George Lawlor, Cathaoirleach, Wexford County Council - Event Opening Address
- Cllr Maura Bell, Mayor, Borough District of Wexford – Agriculture Opening Address
- Barry Caslin, Teagasc – Agricultural Grant Aid
- Robert Steacy - Solar Farms from a farmer's perspective
- Eoin Kinsella - Agricultural Scientist, Wexford County Council

### **Biodiversity and Food**

- Cllr Mary Farrell Cathaoirleach of the Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment SPC - Opening Address
- Michael Devereux - Enniscorthy Allotments
- Richard Mulcahy - 100 Million Trees
- Claire McCreesh (Wexford Environmental Network) - ENVITE Edible Towns Network
- Mary Reynolds – “We are the Ark”

### **Transport**

- Carolyne Godkin, Director of Service – Opening Address
- Alan O' Shea & Tom Byrne - Active Travel Team , Wexford County Council
- Claire O'Rourke - Sustainability Manager Wexford Bus
- Mary O'Leary - General Manager Local Link

### **Energy**

- Cllr Michael Sheehan, Cathaoirleach, New Ross Municipal District – Opening Address
- Adeline Carpenter - SEAI
- Colm O'Mahony & Michael Kinsella - South-East Energy Agency
- Irene (Morris) Cadogan & Fiona O'Loughlin - Enniscorthy Sustainable Energy Communities
- Jill Kelleher - Wexford's Local Enterprise Office

The agricultural session, in particular, raised some live issues:

- Concern about a lack of consultation when policy was being created. The Agricultural section welcomed the day.
- Concerns were raised in relation to the implementation of the current forestry programme.
- Concern on land use for alternative fuels and its impact on food production.
- Alternative energy supply being supported on farms.



**Wexford County Council  
Climate Action Event**

Day: Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 Time: All Day  
Location: The Street, County Buildings

Comhairle Contae Loch Garman  
Wexford County Council

Scan Here to book your FREE ticket



*Advert for Climate Action Day Event*



*Attendees at the Biodiversity and Food Session at Climate Action Event*

## Community Climate Action Programme (CCAP)

The application process for the Community Climate Action Programme will open shortly and in preparation for that, the Community Climate Action Officer, Clinton Donovan held a number of Community Information Evenings and Frank Burke, the Climate Action Coordinator gave an update on the Draft Climate Action Plan and when and how people could make submissions.

There were five Information Evenings held in the five Municipal Districts during September. The Community Climate Action Programme application process was outlined at the information evenings, as well as a demonstration of the online application form. The evenings were well attended, and positive community enthusiasm was evident throughout.

DATE	VENUE	ATTENDEES
19/09/2023	Our Lady's Island Community Centre	18
20/09/2023	Gorey Library	22
21/09/2023	County Hall, Wexford	20
26/09/2023	New Ross Library	17
28/09/2023	Enniscorthy Library	25

**Table 1.1: Community Climate Action Programme Information Evenings**

### Draft Climate Action Plan Library Drop-in sessions:

In further support of this and the public consultation process for the draft Climate Action Plan, drop-in sessions are scheduled in the libraries in late October 2023. This will allow the public to directly contact the Climate Action Team and discuss their work.

- Wexford Library - Monday 23rd October - 10.30 to 12 noon
- Stella Maris, Kilmore Quay- Monday 23rd October - 2pm to 3.30 pm
- Gorey Library - Tuesday 24th October Time - 10.30 to 12 noon
- Enniscorthy Library - Tuesday 24th October - 2pm to 3.30 pm
- New Ross Library - Wednesday 25th October - 10.30 to 12 noon

### Publicity and Public Outreach

The Climate action meetings, public events and stakeholder engagement activities have been supported by advertising, press releases, and social media posts where appropriate.

#### Advertising

The local papers carried advertising for the climate action day of June 1<sup>st</sup> and will advertise the opening of the consultation period for the draft Climate Action Plan and how and where the Draft CAP can be accessed during the statutory consultation period.

### Publicity

Frank Burke, the Climate Action Co-ordinator and Clare Kelly, the Climate Action Officer were interviewed on South East Radio about the Climate Action Day and the Draft Climate Action Plan.

### Website

The council's website has been updated regularly to highlight the activities being undertaken in the development of Wexford's Climate Action Plan and the Community Climate Action Programme. Material has included promotion on public events, press releases and the online Climate Action Survey. The draft Climate Action Plan will be available through the consultation portal.

### Social Media

Clare Kelly and Frank Burke feature in a video explaining these new Climate Action roles and the climate action work being undertaken in the Council. There have also been posts promoting the public events and activities.

### Climate Action Mailing list

The Climate Action Team have also developed a newsletter which will be sent out to our mailing list monthly. The newsletter will keep those with an active interest informed on ongoing climate action, funding opportunities and actions that can be taken by all.

The Climate Action Mailing list has seen growth in its subscribers since its inception in July. It is hoped that it will be a useful source of information, keeping stakeholders informed about the progress on the Climate Action Plan, the CCAP, what's happening within the Decarbonisation Zone, and more.



**Figure 1.9: Growth in Newsletter Subscriptions**