

## **Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment SPC**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019 @ 14.30**

**Cathaoirleach:** Cllr. Mary Farrell

**Present:** Cllr. Maura Bell, Cllr. Tom Forde, Cllr. Leonard Kelly, Cllr. Oliver Walsh, Cllr. Jim Moore, Ms. Karen Finigan (PPN Member), Mr. Billy Murphy (PPN Member), Mr. Joe Ryan (Trade Union), Mr. James Brennan (Agriculture rep. in lieu of Ned Lyng), John Carley Director of Services, Gerry Forde Senior Engineer, Brendan Cooney Senior Executive Scientist, Clare Kelly Assistant Scientist, George Colfer Executive Engineer, Rory O'Mahony Senior Executive Engineer, Hugh Maguire Administrative Officer, Cliona Connolly Senior Staff Officer, Jane Wickham Energy Officer 3CEA, Lillie O'Brien Assistant Staff Officer

**Apologies:** Cllr Donal Kenny, Mr. Danny Forde (PPN Member), Ms. Mary Walsh (Business & Commercial), Mr. John Somers (Construction Industry Federation)

### **1. Introduction**

Cllr. Mary Farrell (Cathaoirleach) welcomed everyone to the first Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Meeting for Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment and she said that she looked forward to working with the Committee Members over the next 5 years or so.

### **2. Presentation on the Remit of the SPC**

Hugh Maguire Administrative Officer briefly advised the Committee of the contents of the Meeting Pack, Brief Guidelines on new SPC scheme, the make-up of the Committee of SPC, how members were selected, that the current SPC Members is for 5 years and it operates under the Standing Orders of Wexford County Council.

John Carley gave an outline of the role of the Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment SPC and the various functions under its umbrella. He also advised the meeting that the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019 was his last working day in Wexford County Council.

### **Overview of the functions of the Environment Department, Wexford County Council**

Gerry Forde gave a presentation on the Environment Department and the extent of functions and services that came under the remit of the SPC including the 5 main areas of the Environment Department; Water/Air/Noise, General, Climate Change, Coastal and Waste

Mr. Forde also outlined the extent of beaches in the County and the different categories; Blue flag, Green Coast and Designated Bathing Beach, over 250km of coastline and coastal erosion. He informed the meeting that funding for new coastal protection works was expected to be announced for Rosslare at a cost of approx. €7 million. Other works for next year included €1/2million to be spent on flood barrier at Rosslare Burrow. The OPW gave funding in 2018 for Emergency Coastal Protection works at Donaghmore. The presentation also illustrated coastal erosion problems at Kilpatrick, Courtown, Ballyconnigar and a number of other beach locations.

Gerry Forde informed the members that Rory O'Mahony would give a detailed update on walking trails and coastal paths in the County at the next SPC meeting.

He highlighted the importance of the new Waste Presentation Bye-Laws that were adopted in 2019 and he informed the meeting that there had only been 2 crews dealing with waste but now have 4 crews and they are divided into priorities of waste, C&D waste, ELV and waste collection.

He gave a summary of the Water Quality, Air Quality and Noise Pollution issues. He stated that noise monitoring was proposed for all 11 windfarms, some of which had been completed.

He also gave an outline of current activities with regard to Public Conveniences, Waste Enforcement, Environment Education and Awareness, Climate Change, General Administration and the Energy Team. It was requested that the members receive the powerpoint presentations by email and a list of the environmental staff, what their jobs are and their emails.

A discussion ensued and a query was raised regarding the extent of the coastline that is vulnerable to coastal erosion, and if the Council has the capacity or if external help is needed to deal with the problem? It was also queried if there is a timeline and who would tell families losing their homes that there is no support and that they are not allowed to put any form of mitigation on their property.

Gerry Forde advised that he will come back to the SPC with a detailed study and cost benefit analysis on coastal erosion. John Carley said it would be difficult in getting a cost benefit analysis as you would need an economist and there is no clear answer on all the issues presented by coastal erosion.

Cllr. Mary Farrell suggested that Gerry Forde might contact Cllr. Jim Moore after the SPC meeting regarding a family home that is under the threat of erosion to which Cllr. Moore had referred to during the meeting.

### **3. Climate Change Adaption Strategy 2019-2024 Implementation.**

Brendan Cooney, Senior Executive Scientist gave a presentation on the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and the progression of Climate Change along with its impact. It was stated that global temperatures have risen by 0.8 degrees Centigrade between 1900 and 2012. He said that there were 2 strands – adaptation (adapt to changes happening already) and mitigation (try minimise extra greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere). He said that climate change occurred before but for reasons like volcanos and natural phenomena. The Adaptation Strategy is to reduce our vulnerability to the effects of climate change and to become more resilient.

He outlined the likely impacts of Climate Change such as; a rise in sea levels, more river and coastal flooding, more frequent and intense extreme weather events, water shortages, adverse impact on water quality and new pests and diseases.

He stated that the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 was adopted by the Council in October and is now in place. It contains 6 themes, 13 objectives and 82 actions to be delivered in the course of the Strategy. He also spoke briefly about mitigation and the main points were to improve energy performance, NZEB and passive housing projects and the use of renewable energy.

### **Prohibition on the burning of Smoky Coal in Wexford Town.**

Brendan Cooney gave a presentation to the SPC Members on the topic of smokeless fuels and about real-time monitoring of air quality being carried out in the 4 towns of Gorey, Enniscorthy, Wexford and New Ross. A national smoky fuels ban has not been introduced yet and as a result in towns that have smokeless zones, unfortunately the public can still purchase smoky coal elsewhere outside of the prohibition zones.

Brendan Cooney stated that there is a smokeless zone in Wexford and air quality is much better than in Enniscorthy and New Ross.

Air quality monitoring stations are located in open spaces close to residential areas to get a better read on air quality. A National ban on smoky fuels, a further extension of smokeless fuel zones to other towns or action by the minister for local authorities under the Air Pollution Act 1987 (as amended) were all under consideration at present.

## **5. Energy Report**

Jane Wickham gave a presentation on 3CEA which was set up in 2002 by Carlow and Kilkenny County Councils and then Wexford joined in 2014. Its mission is to reduce energy demand, reduce CO2 emissions and drive the economic activity to a sustainable enterprise. It is hoped that there would be a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.

The key strategic areas are housing, public lighting and transport and it is hoped to reduce carbon emissions by 30% by 2030. In May 2020 it is hoped to achieve the ISO 15001 standard in Energy Management. In looking at energy consumption and cost in Wexford County Council electricity was the main user of energy and the costliest element followed by heating and transport.

She informed the meeting that working groups were set up within the energy team and 12 houses were retrofitted with solar panels and other energy efficiency measures by Wexford County Council with 50% funding coming from SEAI for doing this and €65,000 provided through grant aid. Wexford County Council is the first local authority to take the lead on public lighting, 2,000 Wexford public lights have so far been upgraded to crisp white LED lamps and it is proposed to have another 5,400 done by end of 2020.

Jane also informed the meeting that with regard to energy awareness, they have joined up with OPW Optimising Power at Work campaign which is all about behavioural changes which will be circulated in the coming week.

She stated that the Machinery yard purchased 3 electric cars and 1 van is on trial with the Environmental Warden. She said that some difficulties had been encountered in finding the charging points.

## **4. Draft Harbours & Piers Bye-Laws**

George Colfer gave his presentation on Piers and Harbours. He stated that 2004 Byelaws only applied to Kilmore Quay. He also said there would be a level of public consultation for the proposed 2019 Harbour Byelaws. Hugh Maguire confirmed that it would be advertised on the Council's website and local papers if any changes need to be made. George also stated that it might be useful to promote through PPN also.

## **7. Any Other Business**

Cllr. Mary Farrell addressed the meeting mentioning the following

1. Draft Schedule of Meetings for 2020 was adopted by the Committee.
2. Biodiversity will be on the agenda for the next SPC.
3. Outside experts to be invited for specific specialist topics at SPC Meetings.

Jim Moore raised a point that it would be a good idea to have a spreadsheet of progress against items raised. Cllr. Mary Farrell also mentioned two spaces available on an Action Workshop on Climate and Biodiversity being held in Dublin on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and Cllr. Maura Bell and Cllr. Leonard Kelly agreed to attend.

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