

Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment SPC

Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday, 13th February 2020 at 14.30

Chairperson: Cllr. Mary Farrell

Present: Cllr. Tom Forde, Cllr. Leonard Kelly, Cllr. Oliver Walsh, Cllr. Jim Moore, Ms. Karen Finigan (PPN Member), Mr. Joe Ryan (Trade Union), Mr. Ned Lyng (Agriculture rep.), Mr. Danny Forde (PPN Member), Mr. John Somers (Construction Industry Federation) Carolyne Godkin, A/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, David Minogue Communications Officer, Cliona Connolly Senior Staff Officer, Philip Knight Senior Staff Officer, Lillie O'Brien Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Cllr Donal Kenny, Cllr. Maura Bell, Ms. Mary Walsh (Business & Commercial), Mr. Billy Murphy (PPN Member)

1. Minutes and matters arising.

The Minutes of the SPC Meeting dated 14th November 2019 were approved on the proposal of Cllr. Leonard Kelly and seconded by Cllr. Oliver Walsh. The Chairperson welcomed new members.

2. Presentation on MyWaste.ie

Cllr. M. Farrell began by stating the MyWaste.ie website was a useful resource in relation to waste issues and leaflets but it needs to be distributed to the public as people are unsure about what to put into the different household waste collection bins. A new app can be downloaded which hopefully will encourage young people to look at it and there is also a link on the Council's website. A video of a Panda Waste Recycling and Recovery Facility in Kildare was shown at the meeting and it was suggested that a site visit to the plant could be arranged.

3. Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Update

Gerry Forde gave a presentation on the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Update on Actions. The Committee was informed that the Strategy incorporated 6 thematic areas, 13 objectives and 85 actions. The thematic areas were;

- Local adaptation governance & business operations.
- Infrastructure & built environment.
- Land use development.
- Drainage & flood management.
- Natural resources & coastal Infrastructure.
- Community Health & wellbeing.

Some of the actions included setting up a Steering Group and incorporating the strategy into the new Corporate Plan 2019-2024 (done), changing the Director of Services title to include Climate Change (done), appointing a Climate Change Action Officer (progressing), focussing on green procurement e.g. wood from sustainable forests, promoting green growth initiatives (NZEB houses and the promotion and development of Greenways (SE Greenway, Rosslare to Waterford Greenway, Wexford to Rosslare Greenway etc.)

There was a discussion on the following queries after the presentation;

- If there were targets set for green procurement and if tenders would no longer be based only on the lowest price. It was noted that the tender would depend on the nature of the goods/services, that further national government guidance is expected on the subject and that there would be a greater focus on environmentally friendly purchasing.

4. Waste Enforcement/County Wexford Walking Trails

(i) Waste Enforcement

Rory O'Mahony gave an outline of the functions of the Waste Enforcement side of Environment. He stated that our Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspection (RMCEI) returns were due to be sent to the EPA in the next few days the Council's performance will be judged with regard to the RMCEI outcomes. He also informed the meeting that Environment Section is preparing its Enforcement Plan for 2020 which will look at inspections and plans for the year. He highlighted the importance of enforcing the Waste Presentation Bye-Laws that were adopted last year.

(ii) County Wexford Walking Trails

Rory O'Mahony then gave a brief presentation on Walking Trails and Greenways. He informed the meeting of the ORIS (Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme) grants that were received from the Department of Rural & Community Development (DRCD) for the Slí Charman Coastal Trail, Three Rocks Trail – Ferrycarrig to Forth Mountain and the Wexford Walking Trails (56 Trails at 23 Locations). He stated that Cahore Point has a 5k walking route but that there has been some local concern about parking and toilet facilities which it is hoped to address this year. A wide ranging discussion took place on the above two items with the following queries being raised & answered by staff in attendance:

- Garda powers regarding Beach Bye-Laws.
- Recent Council court case regarding litter & fines generally.
- Waste Prevention Bye-laws & household surveys
- Waste Management & in particular soil and scrap cars, amnesties.
- Cost of walking trail maintenance & managing expectations of users that these are trails not footpaths.

5. Environment Education and Awareness Programme.

Cliona Connolly gave a presentation on Environment Education and Awareness looking at projects, competitions and initiatives aimed at Schools and Communities throughout the County such as the Green Schools Campaign, National Spring Clean, the Annual Environmental Artwork Competition, the Annual Christmas Decoration Recycling Competition, the Keep Wexford Beautiful Competition and the Environment Awards.

Other Initiatives referred to included National Spring Clean, Waste Prevention Grant, Trees for Wexford (2015-2019 38,000 trees distributed), Conscious Cup Campaign, Stop Food Waste – Southern Waste Region Waste Management Plan, October reuse month and more.

She pointed out that waste has been reduced by 10% in County Hall through the segregation of bins, the distribution of keep cups and 20c charge on disposable cups. A proposal is going to the Management Team next Tuesday to progress the Paperless Strategy and reduce waste by 20/30% in County Hall. She also informed meeting that the bark mulch from the Christmas trees goes to community groups or district gardens for reuse.

6. Report on Biodiversity Plan

C. Connolly stated that through the LCDC, an application for Leader Funding has been made for "Understanding My Area's Biodiversity". This gives training and basic understanding, so if a community can draw up an action plan of a project they can identify that is required in their area they can apply for funding.

A discussion ensued regarding the following matters;

- It was proposed that the Council should arrange for a cinema advertising campaign on littering/illegal dumping and in particular dog fouling.
- It was noted that the Council has an ongoing "Green Dog Walker" campaign, has been involved in a regional campaign on dog fouling, an animated "Stop Food Waste" cinema advertising recently and involved with Kilkenny and Waterford County Council in a roadside litter campaign "All Roads Lead Home". C. Connolly is to seek grant funding for further cinema advertising on littering/illegal dumping etc.
- The use of a flail to cut back roadside hedgerows on the N11 from the Whitford roundabout down the Wexford Bypass was raised possibly undoing the good work of planting 38,000 trees through "Trees for Wexford" 2015-2019. The Roads Department is to be contacted in this regard.
- G. Forde pointed out that the Planning Department has responsibility for Biodiversity which is due for review so it should be deferred until the next meeting whereby it would be hoped Planning will have appointed a Heritage Officer.

7. Coastal Matters

George Colfer, Coastal Engineer presented the meeting with an overview of Beaches, Coastal Erosion/Protection, Piers and Harbours and miscellaneous. The presentation outlined the Blue Flag/Green Coast Programme, Designated Beaches and issues at beaches such as camping. He went on to highlight coastal erosion problems at Kilpatrick, Donaghmore and Rosslare Strand and advised of works that were completed in Donaghmore 2018 and planned protection works for Rosslare. The presentation also featured Piers and Harbours. G. Colfer said that Courtown Harbour was dredged in 2018 and the same would be done in Kilmore Quay in April which will take approximately a month. He also highlighted planning, tourism and economic issues related to the coastal areas including various books/films such as John Banville's *The Sea* and Colm Toibin's *Brooklyn* that were set on the Wexford coastline.

The Committee Members had queries regarding the following areas;

- Coastal erosion and seeking funding from the OPW for urgent coastal protection.
- The possibility of e-charging points at beach car parks and dredging at Crescent Quay, Wexford
- A request for an OPW representative to update the SPC on the CFRAMS report.
- Concerns were raised about coastal erosion on the Dublin-Wexford railway line.
- The matter of the coastal erosion survey feeding into the preparation for the next Co. Development Plan was highlighted and if the SPC would have a role with Bye-laws.
- G. Forde replied saying that the coastal erosion survey was nearing completion and that Environment would liaise with Planning and that Irish Rail were carrying out some coastal protection works currently. C. Godkin said that a survey on coastal erosion would be done first and the OPW will be approached for funding for Co. Wexford. It was noted any Byelaws will come before SPC and then the full County Council.

8. Report on Litter Management Activity

Hugh Maguire gave a presentation on Implementation of Litter Management Plan 2017-2019. He highlighted definition of litter, the legislative background, the impact litter has on the county, how we approach litter based on 4 strands Environment Education & Awareness, Litter Prevention & Control, Enforcement and Partnership with Community/Voluntary organisations & businesses. The presentation set out measures under each heading and how they are progressing together with statistics on how littered the County is, complaints received, fines issued prosecutions secured and Community Clean Ups undertaken (781 – 2019). The Anti-Dumping Initiative 2019 also featured in the presentation.

9. 5G

Brendan Cooney, Senior Executive Scientist gave a presentation on 5G Mobile Phone Technology explaining what electromagnetic radiation is and comparing it with nuclear radiation. The presentation outlined the electromagnetic spectrum showing frequencies for non-ionising radiation (e.g. radio waves & microwaves) and ionising radiation (e.g. Gamma rays & x-rays) and the differences between them. Mr. Cooney went on to explain mobile phone cells, the radio wave spectrum and what is penetrable, semi penetrable and non-penetrable. The frequencies at which 5G operates around Europe was illustrated and (Ireland - 3.4-3.8 Ghz and future up to 26 Ghz) He also stated that 5G is already operating in Wexford Town through Eir since last year. Public Health England considered in 2019 that overall exposure would remain low relative to guidelines and that there should be no real consequences for public health from 5G. The Chairperson thanked Mr. Cooney for his presentation.

David Minogue, Communications Officer stated that he had met with the protest group at the entrance to Co. Hall today but 5G did not come under the Council's remit (under ComReg.) to deal with and most antennas are exempt from planning. It was agreed by the members that BC & DM would draft a press release outlining the Councils position, including clarification on the legislative remit and that based on evidence there are currently no concerns regarding 5G.


10. Any Other Business

Cllr. L. Kelly suggested that representatives of Comhairle na NÓg be invited to come to the next SPC meeting as it would be of great benefit to the SPC with their ideas. He further enquired if they could have a permanent presence at the meeting. C. Godkin stated that as the seats are already filled on the SPC for this council under an agreed scheme that she would refer the issue to the county secretary for review & commentary.

The chair thanked members for their attendance.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Signed:


Chairperson

Date:

