

## Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment SPC

### Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020 at 14.30

The meeting was held remotely by Ms Teams software connection.

**Cathaoirleach:** Cllr. Mary Farrell

**Present:** Cllr. Donal Kenny, Cllr. Jim Moore, Cllr. Maura Bell, Mr. Billy Murphy (PPN Member), Mr. Joe Ryan (Trade Union), Mr. Danny Forde (PPN Member), Carolyne Godkin, A/Director of Services, Gerry Forde Senior Engineer, Rory O'Mahony Senior Executive Engineer, Capt Phil Murphy Harbour Master, Hugh Maguire Administrative Officer, Cliona Connolly Senior Staff Officer, Lillie O'Brien Assistant Staff Officer.

**Apologies:** Cllr. Oliver Walsh, Cllr. Tom Forde, Cllr. Leonard Kelly, Ms. Karen Finigan (PPN Member), Mr. Ned Lyng (Agriculture rep.), Ms. Mary Walsh (Business & Commercial), Mr. John Somers (Construction Industry Federation) Brendan Cooney Senior Executive Scientist, George Colfer Executive Engineer, Philip Knight Senior Staff Officer

#### 1. Minutes and matters arising.

The Minutes of the SPC Meeting dated 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020 were noted on the proposal of Cllr. Maura Bell and seconded by Cllr. Jim Moore.

#### 2. Draft Wexford County Council Harbour & Piers Bye-Laws 2020 – Capt. Phil Murphy

Capt. Phil Murphy gave a brief report on the 3 submissions received after public consultation on the draft Wexford Co. Council Harbour & Pier Bye-Laws 2020.

A discussion ensued and the following queries were raised;

- Concern was raised about harbour signage and in particular Kilmore Quay. Captain Phil Murphy responded stating that An Garda Síochána (AGS) were consulted regarding the signage. He said Sgt. Denis Murphy sent an email stating that there were no issues with the signage at Kilmore Quay and the wording on the signage was in order. Councillor Jim Moore noted the position of AGS on the matter and suggested the Garda position be noted in the Bye-laws.
- Gerry Forde stated that a query was raised about Arthurstown Pier and it was noted that it is privately owned and the Council has no plans to take it in charge.
- A point was also made that when Harbour Bye Laws were reviewed it would help if the changes or deletions were highlighted.
- Gerry Forde stated that a lot of time was spent and careful thought put into each pier and harbour in the County and the proposed Bye-Laws will bring more control into these areas.

The Draft Harbour and Pier Bye Laws were recommended on the proposal of Cllr. Jim Moore and seconded by Cllr. Donal Kenny.

### **3. New Litter Management Plan Process**

Hugh Maguire gave a presentation on the proposed new Litter Management Plan. He stated that the last Litter Management Plan (LMP) finished in 2020 and he outlined the process of adopting a new LMP and the legal definition of litter which is broad and can be anything from a cigarette butt to a mattress.

He stated that in reviewing the Litter Management Plan, certain items have to be included and he gave a brief overview of the elements required. He explained the process of review for the LMP which entailed consultation at the moment with staff, Council Members, SPC, PPN and relevant organisations. A draft of the new LMP is expected to be brought to the SPC in January/February 2021 and then to the full Council to consider. The public consultation period may be in February/March 2021 and a report on submissions and adoption by the SPC and the Full Council in March/April 2021. Finally the new LMP might be launched and publicised in April 2021.

He also gave a brief overview on the causes of litter and the approach of the Council in dealing with litter. Over the last number of years the Council has used the National Litter Pollution Monitoring survey system (NLPMS) and in 2019 around 78% of the County was classed as litter free or slightly littered, 19% moderately littered and just over 3% significantly littered. The mattress amnesty was very successful this year, 2,700 mattresses were received in Holmestown from July to early September. There was also mention of some of the proposed measures in the Litter Management Plan and hoped to have the new plan in place in April, 2021.

Carolyn Godkin pointed out that although today's SPC is a consultation opportunity for the members to make particular points about the LMP, if they missed today they can either communicate directly to Hugh Maguire or else during the public consultation period.

Following the briefing a discussion took place and the following points and queries were raised;

- Dog fouling – A query was raised about dog bag dispensers and bins for walking routes and trails? Hugh Maguire responded by saying that the main towns are well serviced with bins & pooper scoopers such as Wexford. Dispensers and bins are also provided at Blue Flag beaches and public areas such as carparks and playgrounds. In relation to trails it is not feasible to put dog bins everywhere as it puts an overhead on the Council to service those bins and a clean-up crew would not always be available to attend those areas and this can attract illegal dumping. Dog fouling doesn't feature as a major item of litter in the annual National Litter Pollution surveys. Dog fouling is more concentrated in urban areas and open spaces used by the public. If there is a big problem in a particular area more Warden Patrols for that area can be undertaken. It is difficult to enforce dog fouling breaches as a witness (member of the public) is required with photos or a Council Warden present for each incident. Wardens patrolling black spot areas help and there was success recently in the Enniscorthy area in an estate where the Warden worked with the residents and the situation has improved. Audio warning devices have also been used recently together with signage, social media campaigns, Green Dog Walker Initiative etc.

### **4. Environment Education and Awareness – Cliona Connolly**

Cliona gave an update on the Environment Education and Awareness Schools and Communities Programme.

- Under the Schools Programme she stated that 36 schools were awarded Green Flag in 2020 and considering many schools were not open they had still submitted their application to An Taisce. Killanerin NS and CBS Secondary School Enniscorthy were awarded their first Green Flag. A Green School Seminar was held in November with 42 online schools participating.
- Most school art competitions and workshops couldn't take place this year. There were some online workshops in Biodiversity and the Marine Environment. Environment Section's main event, the Christmas Decoration competition unfortunately can't go ahead this year due to the COVID-19 Pandemic but a Christmas School competition will be circulated next week.
- Applications for the Keep Wexford Beautiful Competition were circulated in June and judged in July and there were 57 community groups entered. It is hoped to announce the Environmental Awards in week beginning 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 on local radio and once the date and time of announcement is finalised it will be circulated to the Councillors.
- A Waste Awareness week will commence on 7<sup>th</sup> December and this will tie in with the Environmental Awards.
- A new online system through the CRM for trees was used for 2020 where applicants choose whether they wanted trees or hedging. Around 156 applications were received and 1 paper application which reduced the amount of paper used. About 750 trees and 14,185 saplings and hedging will be given out.
- 8 applications were received and granted for the Local Waste Prevention grant and some issues arose in submitting the application so an extension was granted due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- 56 applications for the Planting grant were received with an emphasis on pollinator friendly planting.
- National Reuse Month took place in October – 2 online workshops and produced a resource for secondary schools on Fast Fashion – on-line powerpoint presentation and a teachers resource pack circulated to all schools.
- National Spring Clean, although not as normal still, continued in line with whatever restrictions are in place. During Level 5 restrictions at present, only individual and family groups are approved for Clean-Ups at the moment.
- New Litter Awareness Campaign was launched during summer targeting litter thrown from cars quoting "Call Out Litter Louts" advertised on radio and social media.
- Images created for social media and signage for dog fouling where dog poo was put in the bag but the bag left there.
- Education activity for Blue Flag – developed social media approach for marine wild life to create awareness.
- Secured Leader funding for biodiversity training for community groups. Delayed due to Covid.

A discussion ensued and following queries and points were raised;

- What is the procedure if somebody witnessed litter being thrown from a car? The response was that normally an email is sent to Environment stating the date and time of incident, colour and registration no. of vehicle in question, location, what they threw out and if possible pick up the evidence and send it in to the Council. A litter fine can be issued if the evidence and statement are deemed in order. If it's not paid then it would go to court and a witness would have to attend. A number of such cases have gone to court in recent years with successful convictions. CCTV has previously been used to capture roadside littering. It was also pointed out that if members of public find 4/5 bags dumped they should report to CSU and this will be forward to our Clean Up crew to check for evidence and then the Clean Up crew can attend as a witness if it goes to court.

- A question was asked with regard to the number of litter/waste complaints received by the Environment Section in relation to the number of prosecutions of littering obtained by the Council?
- Hugh Maguire advised that the Council receives in the region of 3,000 litter/waste complaints annually and last year 340 litter fines were issued by the Council. When CCTV was used for certain blackspot locations it was good for catching people. The new Waste Presentation Bye Laws has been a good addition as if it is known which property the waste came from, a notice can be issued to that household. The Council issued 50 Waste Bye-Law fines in the last year which is on the increase.

The Chair wished to thank the Clean-Up Crew and the Wardens who do a great job and are always available and she wished to convey her gratitude to them for the great work they are doing. The Other Committee members supported the Cathaoirleach's good wishes.

Gerry Forde stated that there will be a report on Bathing Waters for the next meeting and also at the last meeting he gave an update on the Climate Adaptation Strategy and he will come back with an update on the actions in the Strategy. The first meeting of the Climate Action Group is taking place in the next fortnight. He stated that Climate Action needs to be addressed at every meeting of the SPC.

Hugh Maguire advised that Danny Forde had been in contact and that he encountered some difficulties in getting through to the meeting.

#### **Any Other Business**

Cllr. Mary Farrell outlined a query raised by Danny Forde regarding Wexford County Council's possible membership of 2 organisations with which it had previously been involved namely KIMO, an international local government network that seeks to protect, preserve and enhance marine environments in the North East Atlantic and Baltic Seas and the Nuclear Free Local Authorities with which Wexford Corporation had been involved in the past. Carolyn Godkin stated that she will speak to the County Secretary regarding both and will review it for the next meeting

Capt. Phil Murphy stated that KIMO is an international organisation concerned with oil pollution response and the Council is updating its Oil Pollution Response Plan.

Cllr. Jim Moore recalled that NFLA stand for Nuclear Free Local Authorities, an organisation had a seminar every year and going back in time as Wexford Co. Council was encouraged to join. Much of their activities took part in Northern Ireland.

The Chair thanked the Members for engaging in another remote team meeting and advised the next meeting will be in January/February, 2021. She wished everyone a Happy Christmas.

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

Signed: Mary Farrell  
Cathaoirleach

Date: 5/3/21.

