

Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment Strategic Policy Committee

Minutes of Meeting

held on Thursday 17th February 2022 at 14.30 in Council Chamber & MS Teams

Cathaoirleach: Cllr. Mary Farrell

Present: Cllr. Donal Kenny, Cllr. Jim Moore, Cllr. Oliver Walsh, Cllr. Tom Forde, Cllr. Maura Bell, Cllr. Leonard Kelly, Mr. Danny Forde (PPN Member), Mr. James Brennan (Agriculture), Mr. Billy Murphy, Mr. John Somers (Construction Industry Federation), Carolyne Godkin, A/Director of Services Gerry Forde Senior Engineer, Rory O'Mahony Senior Executive Engineer, Hugh Maguire Administrative Officer, Cliona Connolly Senior Staff Officer, Melissa Goff Senior Staff Officer, Lillie O'Brien Assistant Staff Officer.

Apologies: Mr. Joe Ryan (Trade Union), Ms. Mary Walsh (Business & Commercial), Clare Kelly Climate Change Officer

Cllr. Mary Farrell welcomed everyone to the first SPC meeting of the New Year.

1. Matters arising from Minutes and Confirmation of Minutes of SPC Meeting dated 2nd December 2021

The minutes were proposed by Cllr. Maura Bell and seconded by Cllr. Donal Kenny. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

2. Climate Action and Energy update by Gerry Forde

Gerry Forde provided the Committee with an update on the following items;

- Energy Consumption & Efficiency – WCC 39% energy efficiency > target of 33%.
- Public Lighting – now 91% of all WCC Public Lighting use LED.
- ISO 50001 Energy Management System surveillance audit
- EV Working Group – 6 vehicles in fleet, forklifts & tipper truck and more chargers.
- Active Travel Allocation 2022 - €4.3million.
- Ongoing Climate Change training for staff.
- Tree Policy – will brief on all working groups at next meeting.
- Housing Retrofit Programme – 100 retrofits planned for 2022.
- Staff Survey feedback – survey on awareness & engagement on climate action.

The following queries were raised and responded to after the presentation.

- In the last report the Council was awaiting the Minister for Climate Change & Communication to sign the Act instructing the Council to produce their Climate Action Plans. Has been this received yet? No formal instruction from the Minister has been received yet and the Department will provide help to deliver the Plan. There is a 12 month timeframe once approval is given, which is expected later in the year but this is subject to change.
- The last Meeting Minutes mentioned Climate Central was the source of flood prediction maps being used by the media. This is a real priority and the Council needs to know the problems areas prone to flooding.
- Inter Departmental Coastal Change Management Strategy Group – How are we planning the retreat? The answer was that there is no update yet. It is at early stages on assessing and preparing strategies for climate change and coastal erosion.

- Flood maps from OPW were requested have they been made available? There are numerous flood maps available online on the already mentioned website
- Getting reps into formal information groups – Climate Change Advisory Council may be of interested in doing something down here and consider using that process in advising future policy.
- A question was asked about the decarbonisation zones? No news yet still a question of resources.
- Tree mapping? This matter will be reviewed.
- Who is Climate Central and who do they report to? They are an independent body researching and reporting to the public.
- G. Forde invited the SPC Committee to see the construction works at Seaview and that a trip could be organised over the next few months or so.

3. Draft River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 – Brendan Cooney

Brendan Cooney gave a presentation on the 3rd cycle Draft River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027. This is a national Plan that aims to protect and restore good quality in our rivers, lakes, estuaries, ground water and coastal waters. He covered the following areas

- Health of Ireland's streams, rivers, lakes & estuaries (53% of waters good quality).
- Main pressures on Water Quality which are agriculture, domestic waste-water systems, urban run-off, forestry and urban waste-water treatment systems.
- Wexford River's at risk
- Importance of good water quality.
- Main Themes in the Plan
- Key measures proposed and impacted on water quality from human activities

The draft plan is out for consultation on the Department website and WCC Environment Section and submissions to be sent in by 31st March.

The following matters were discussed and responded to;

- Regarding submissions will it be publicised widely? Yes it was advertised on Facebook and would be put out on twitter feed and an advert placed in newspaper.
- Rivers at risk, what is the Council actively doing in pursuing that or mitigating it? Trying to educate people, such small number of staff we cannot check all farms to see what they are doing so we are trying to get people checking it to improve what's happening whereby nutrients from soil are going into ground waters. The Council is running an EIP Project in Duncannon and this has been a good success. The Department of Agriculture have taken note of the findings from that and incorporating it into various projects that they are running now on a national basis. Rivers that were going into Duncannon were very high in levels of ecoli have now been transformed and it is now mainly from septic tanks malfunctioning or agricultural run-off. Irish Water brought the work on a treatment plant for Duncannon forward and it started last year.
- Is there active engagement at local level? Yes the Department of Agriculture are looking at it at local level now and recognising that local engagement has been a positive development.
- When you talk about rivers, are you talking about enclosed water ways also? Yes all water courses, the Directive covers every single water body. Mainly north and south of the county where the problems lie, the middle area is more tillage.
- Biggest challenge is Climate and then Water Quality and almost half our water bodies are infected.
- The work in Duncannon has shown that a new model does work in working with the agricultural community rather than going straight down the enforcement route.

- Need to raise at the next meeting with regard to resources and Cllr. Farrell will liaise with C. Godkin to present to the next meeting.

4. **Circular Economy Programme 2022-2027 (Circular Waste Economy) – Rory O’Mahony**

Rory O’Mahony gave a presentation on the National Waste Management Plan for the Circular Waste Economy which the Department are pursuing at present. The plan that is being formulated has 3 main Areas and the Committee was briefed under each area.

1. Context Document (such as existing legislation, infrastructure, current situation),
2. Core Plan (3 themes, 12 objectives and Policies) and
3. Delivery (such as implementing, monitoring new plan).

He outlined the process involved in drafting the Management Plan

- The main themes are Consumption, Capture and Compliance.
- It is at the workshop stage of this plan where the department are seeking stakeholders’ views.
- A draft will be completed and tested with SEA/AA Environmental Assessments
- When complete draft is made an internal review will be carried out.
- It will then go to public consultation for 2 months and
- It is hoped to complete the final publication of the Plan in September this year.

The key difference to this Plan compared to any other plan is that it’s trying to bring waste back into the economy as a resource in a circular fashion of capturing waste and recycling.

The following queries were raised, and points made following the presentation.

- It was pointed out that in relation to waste/recycling bins and plastics many people still don’t know what to put into them. People still not 100% sure how to recycle plastics even though the information is on the website.
- Do you have to have a tax book to scrap a car? Cars should be brought to a permitted Scrapyard/ATF site. The chassis of the car can be used if don’t have a tax book in order to be struck off the national vehicle database in Shannon.
- Do plastics have to be washed? Yes, all plastics can be recycled but must be clean. www.Mywaste.ie website is very useful for all queries about waste and recycling.
- With regard to construction waste or car parts be crushed and used for road planings? WCC received a by-product notification for Road planings and are allowed to use them for strengthening and improving our road network. The EPA is going to try and get an End of Waste criteria as it will be a problem. Concrete releases sulphur from broken concrete and the solution for that is that any broken concrete gets broken down like an aggregate and gets reused for production in the future.
- There seems to be a slow roll out of brown bins and is this a contributing factor due to only 3 contractors in the county? There are 3 main authorised waste collectors in Co. Wexford and it doesn’t seem that any more operators are moving into the county. WCC will have to keep working on the brown bin roll out as part of our Inspection Plan. Covid-18 over the last two years has interrupted the door-to-door inspections which should now resume.
 - Update on historic waste facilities – is there any update on Wexford of the 2 low and 2 medium risk and queried the Carcur one in particular? There is 4 historic landfills that WCC will try to achieve a licence from EPA this year as the funding is available from the Department to get consultants. It took longer as Regional Authority had to get framework of consultants together which is now available to WCC. It is hoped to procure from the framework this year. Carcur is a low-risk site

and other two are moderate. They need licence and the Council need to monitor into the future as on downward slope with emissions. No remedial work will be proposed beyond securing the sites.

5. Draft Beach Bye-Laws 2022

H. Maguire reported to the Committee on the Draft Beach Bye-Laws 2022 stating that 153 submissions were received during the Public Consultation Period in 202. A report from the Director of Services had been distributed to the Committee Members on the submissions received. He outlined the issues raised in the submissions received and recommendations made. He stated that the majority of submissions were mainly concerned with Section 18 proposed time restrictions on dogs on Blue Flag Beaches.

The following queries were raised, and points made following the update.

- Many of the submissions had misinterpreted the Section 18 and it was never intended to completely ban dogs from the beach it was only for a restricted time period on the Blue Flag Beaches (5 No.) for the summer season.
- It was pointed out that if we don't have some restriction on dogs we may lose the Blue Flag status on some the Beaches.
- It is up to the SPC to recommend the Draft Beach Bye-Law before it can be brought to the full Council.

It was agreed to schedule another meeting for the first week in March specifically for the Draft Beach Bye-Laws due to an emergency meeting scheduled for 4pm today.

6. Wexford County Council Herbicide Use Policy – Gerry Forde


Gerry Forde informed the meeting that the SPC Committee had previous discussions on the draft policy about the use of Herbicides by WCC and about reducing the use of herbicides and starting alternative trials and WCC signed up to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and the statement is about not automatically reverting the use of herbicides.

An amendment was made to the policy "In playgrounds or hard play areas where children frequently gather the use of herbicides for weed control will not be permitted". Cllr. T. Forde proposed and Cllr. O. Walsh seconded the policy.

7. Any Other Business

Cllr. M. Farrell read out correspondence addressed to Cllr. J. Moore from KIMO International stating they were delighted that Wexford County Council had re-joined and recognised the importance of local authorities becoming members of the organisation and wished WCC well. A list of scheduled meeting showed the next ordinary meeting to be held on the 21st April 2022.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Signed: 
Cathaoirleach

Date: 16/6/22.

