

Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment Strategic Policy Committee
Minutes of Meeting - Thursday 16/06/2022 in County Hall, Wexford & Remotely

Cathaoirleach: Cllr. Mary Farrell

Present: Cllr. Jim Moore, Cllr. Donal Kenny (remotely), Cllr. Maura Bell (remotely), Cllr. Leonard Kelly (remotely), Cllr. Oliver Walsh (remotely), Mr. Danny Forde (PPN Member remotely), Gerry Forde Senior Engineer, Brendan Cooney Senior Executive Scientist, Rory O'Mahony Senior Executive Engineer, George Colfer Executive Engineer, Hugh Maguire Administrative Officer, Clare Kelly Climate Change Officer, Catherine Mc Loughlin, Heritage Officer.

Apologies: Cllr. Tom Forde, Mr. Joe Ryan (Trade Union), Mr. John Somers (Construction Industry Federation), Ms. Mary Walsh (Business & Commercial), Mr. James Brennan (Agriculture)

Cllr. Mary Farrell welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Confirmation of Minutes of Meetings held on 16th June, 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st April, 2022 were proposed by Cllr. Donal Kenny and seconded by Cllr. Maura Bell.

- 2. Climate Action Matters Update** – Clare Kelly gave an update presentation to the Committee. The presentation covered the following items;
- Wexford County Council has achieved 42% energy efficiency saving since 2011.
 - Energy use has risen after COVID-19 and energy audits are proposed for Harbour Buildings.
 - BEC Energy upgrades proposed for Fire Stations, Old County Hall & Spawell Centre.
 - A target for a 50% reduction in energy use is expected in the Government Climate Plan.
 - The switch to LED Public Lighting has already reduced energy use by 51%.
 - The DOT Draft Strategy for EVs discussed – Priority is given to home charging at night-time. Neighbourhood and Destination charging are favoured for public charging options.
 - A Zero Emission Vehicle Ireland Office will be set within DOT to promote EV use etc.
 - The number of EV Chargers installed by WCC and the No. of EV vehicles was outlined.
 - Climate Action training progressing with 78% of staff completed, championing Leadership now available on-line for Council Members & Senior Officials.
 - The Govt. Climate Action Plan launched in Nov. 2021. LA Climate Action Plans are being prepared in 2022/23 and will include a Pilot Decarbonisation Zone (Enniscorthy).
 - Details of a WCC Workshop under Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) held in Barntown in June, was outlined. Topics included Climate Action, Sec Prog., Biodiversity, Green Schools, Active Travel, Walking Trails, Energy Efficiency and Access etc.

The following queries were raised and responded to.

- A request was made that EV Charging Stations be installed in Blue Flag Beach Carparks with thousands of extra visitors each year? The response was that the busiest car parks are being monitored in this regard.

2. Coastal Matters Update:

Gerry Forde and George Colfer presented an Update Report to the Committee including details of recent works undertaken such as the pedestrian bridge at Ballyconnigar to allow access to the Beach.

It was noted that the Summer Season is underway and temporary Beach Staff such as Beach Lifeguards, Beach Wardens, Litter Patrol Staff and local Link bus services to some Beaches are all in place and active for the Summer Season. The Bathing Water Quality Monitoring Programme has commenced with all results clear to date. Wexford County Council hosted the National Blue Flag and Green Coast Awards at Curracloe Beach with the County winning 8 Beach & Marina Blue Flags and 9 Green Coast Awards. Work is continuing on the design of the Rosslare Strand Coastal Protection and Flood Relief Scheme and the coastline is being monitored and surveyed in relation to possible vulnerable areas for coastal erosion. Seaview Emergency works are complete and a Planning Application is expected to be submitted to An Bord Pleanála by the end of the year for an overall scheme for Seaview. Preliminary coastal erosion studies are being undertaken at St. Helens and Ballyhealy,

After the report the Committee Members had some queries and questions as follows arose which were responded to by the Environment Section Staff;

- The Members noted that the pedestrian Bridge at Ballyconnigar was now completed.
- There was a query in relation to a Surfing School Business operating in front of the toilets at White Gap and the one-way road from White Gap to Ballinesker. The response was that Council Staff were in touch with the Surf School business that will be moving to a private property location and arrangements are being made to licence the Surf Schools with appropriate conditions. The Council will also look at the process of making the one-way system permanent. Concerns about Sand Boarding were noted as a matter for the Beach Wardens to pursue.
- The matter of the possible closure of a public right of way at Ballymoney close to a Hotel was raised. It was noted that this matter is being followed up by the Planning Enforcement Section of the Council.
- The issue of public toilets for Cahore was discussed. The response noted that there was a lack of a public wastewater system in this area but the request would be explored to see how it might be progressed.

3. Biodiversity Update

Catherine Mc Loughlin, Heritage Officer gave an update report on Biodiversity Matters to the Committee Members including the following;

- National biodiversity week held in May featured tree planting at St. John's Enniscorthy.
- There was an on-line and in-person talk held in Barntown Community Centre on Underwater Bio-diversity.
- Library talks featured the Barn Owls of Co. Wexford and a Bio-diversity Workshop on bees.
- It was noted that there was a tight turnaround time in relation to grant funding in the Heritage Sector.
- There is new Heritage Stewardship funding for Hedgerow Surveys.
- Urban ecological corridors have been introduced in Gorey MD and one for WBD.
- Ongoing engagement with Community Groups on Biodiversity.
- National Heritage Week is 13th to 21st August, 2022.
- A New County Wexford Heritage Forum is being set up.
- The new National Biodiversity Plan is at Draft stage and the new County Biodiversity Plan will work through the County Heritage Forum.

After the presentation the following queries were raised, points made and responses given.

- Concern was expressed about the potential loss of funding due to a shortage of ecologists.

- The response was that for baseline surveys, specialist staff are required and that the Heritage Officer will talk to the Department about the possibility of retaining funding.
- It noted that the Rosslare Harbour Maritime Festival is on from 17th to 19th June.

4. Any Other Business

Motion on the National Inspection Plan for Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems.

The following Motion was brought to the CCBDENV Strategic Policy Committee following a presentation by Ian Plunkett on the National Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems Inspection Plan (Septic Tanks) at the previous meeting held on 21st April 2022. The wording of the Motion was as follows;

“Wexford County Council calls on the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to amend the Regulations relating to the registration of DWWTS. This is to allow home owners who missed out on the original registration date of 1st February, 2013 to register and become eligible under the DWWTS Scheme of Financial Assistance for the repair or upgrade of systems that have failed inspections.

The Council also calls on the Minister to increase the current maximum grant level of €5,000 in light of recent significant cost increases for remedial works to Treatment Systems”.

The Motion was proposed by Donal Kenny and seconded by Maura Bell.


The matter of a very over-powering odour in the vicinity of the Custom Compost Plant at Ballyminaun, Gorey was raised by the Members. The odour is noxious and is present on a very regular basis in the local area and is a source of great concern and complaint among local residents. It was requested that strong action be taken to alleviate the problem of the odour in the local area.

Gerry Forde, senior engineer advised the Committee Members that the Plant was under the jurisdiction of the EPA for a number of years but was back now within the remit of Wexford County Council.

The company had undertaken on a number of occasions to carry out mitigation works to improve the situation with regard to odour. This does not seem to have been successful. Wexford County Council propose to issue enforcement notices under the Air Pollution Act 1987 to help improve the situation.

It was noted that the next meeting is proposed for Thursday 15th September, 2022.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Signed: 
Cathaoirleach

Date: 29/9/22.