

Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment Strategic Policy Committee
Minutes of Meeting - Thursday 17/11/2022 in County Hall, Wexford & Remotely

Cathaoirleach: Cllr. Mary Farrell

Present: Cllr. Jim Moore, Cllr. Donal Kenny (remotely), Cllr. Tom Forde (remotely), Mr. Danny Forde (PPN Member remotely), Mr. James Brennan (Agriculture), Mr. Kevin Molloy (PPN Member), Mr. Allen Holman (PPN Member), Sonia Hunt Executive Planner, Carolyne Godkin Director of Services, Gerry Forde Senior Engineer, George Colfer Executive Engineer, Clare Kelly Climate Change Officer, Melissa Goff Senior Staff Officer, Lillie O'Brien Assistant Staff Officer.

Apologies: Cllr. Maura Bell, Cllr. Leonard Kelly, Cllr. Oliver Walsh, Mr. Joe Ryan (Trade Union), Mr. John Somers (Construction Industry Federation), Ms. Mary Walsh (Business & Commercial). Hugh Maguire Administrative Officer, Ciona Connolly, Environmental Awareness Officer

Cllr. Mary Farrell welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Confirmation of Minutes of Meetings held on 29th September, 2022

Clare Kelly informed the meeting that there was a correction to the minutes regarding the timeframe for the Climate Action Plan which will be March 2023 rather than end of this year.

Kevin Molloy requested the presentations from previous meeting be emailed to the Members.

2. Climate Action Update – Clare Kelly

Clare Kelly gave a detailed update on the progress made under the following headings:

- Climate Action Plan.
- Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.
- Energy Efficiency and Monitoring.
- EasyGo Chargers.
- Climate Action Training.
- EV Working Group.
- Creative Climate Projects
- Sustainable Development Goal Week.
- Sustainable Energy Communities.
- Landscape Architects Think Tank.

A discussion ensued and the following queries were raised and responses were provided.

- Will the EV Chargers for the 13 locations in the County be installed by the company? The response was that EasyGo Charge will do the installation on a service contract for 15 years at no direct cost to WCC. EasyGo Charge in conjunction with Eir offered to fit fast chargers at no cost to the Council apart from providing the car parking spaces. They will derive income from the charger and need 20 fast chargers throughout the county. There is currently a lack of fast chargers in the County.
- A question was raised concerning a list of locations for the fast chargers? It was advised that the Council is preparing a list.

- It was pointed out that WCC Office in Kilmore and the International Marina have no charging points (clarification subsequently that a charging point to be provided this year, work to commence soon) It was queried if the Council are involved in any charging regimes for this and the response was not at present.
- Queries have been received from Community Groups who are interested in applying for grants – who provides spec. on Chargers and method of payment? Ray Murphy replied that a pilot scheme is being carried out in Kilmore Quay and using a company called EasyGo Charging, Ray was involved with inhouse chargers using the same company. The electricity connection is usually supplied by the Council. Grant aid is available from SEAI for public chargers that is not in the capital fund.
- It was also pointed out that as part of the deal Eir must take out 13 phone boxes in the county and which will enhance the streetscapes.
- Climate Change Workshop – only 5 places were allocated as it's a regional event.
- Linte na Farrage - LED displayed on quays – John Barry Monument LED light draped over the monument. How is the level of the future level set? The response was it was calculated based on the IPP Assessment Report earlier in the year and then historical data on storm surges for Wexford. It was explained that there are 3 locations, one in Ferrybank was there for 10 days, one on the Quays the horizontal line and one draped on John Barry's Statue
- In response to a query, it was noted that basic Climate Change Training which was provided for all staff last year.

3. Energy Efficiency – South East Energy Agency (SEEA)

Gerry Forde introduced Johan Muller to the meeting and informed the meeting about the South East Energy Agency (previously 3 CEA) and that the objective of the Energy Agency is about reducing the carbon footprint of member local authorities.

Johan gave an energy efficiency update presentation with an overview on the following matters;

- Monitoring and reporting.
- Significant Energy Users.
- Transport Energy Consumption.
- Public Lighting Energy Consumption and
- Apex LC use LPG gas to produce own electricity,
- County Hall – consumption trend has decreased
- Wexford Swimming pool – consumption lower but higher than Apex and the impact of COVID-19.

The following points were raised and responded to.

- A query was raised about vehicle fuel efficiency. The reply was that there is a Fuel Management System which shows quantity consumed and figures are in Kilowatt rather than litres using figures from SEEA.
- If improved efficiency of fleet is that reflected? Yes, that will impact the fuel consumption and the Council will also be looking at alternative fuels, including possible mixture of vegetable oil with conventional fossil fuels
- The figures are accessible on via the internet
- Will the Committee get update on the county's consumption?
- Can access the SEEA report online once Climate Action Plan up and running next year it will become available. The presentation from today will be available to the Committee.
- It was pointed out that the challenges the Council face are around 2 main areas - is its fleet (need hydrogen gas to resolve fleet issues) and old buildings to bring up to date. Public lighting is well on track to achieve target.

- It was also noted that the Council owns 280 different fleet assets with the majority fully owned. 4 vehicles purchased in 2018 and are available to staff. 15 EVs with a couple more ordered but we have limited availability. The Council will have about 15% electric. We are also looking at gas and hydrotreated vegetable oil.

4. Reg Energy BioGas Project – Ray Murphy

Ray Murphy gave a presentation on the RegEnergy BioGas Project for Wexford Fire Station and he outlined the plan, the installation which received up to 80% of funding grant aid. He also outlined the Installation to date. Hoping to go live in the next couple of weeks.

The following queries were raised and responded to

- Is this being used as a pilot project and is there grants available for all Wexford County Council sites? The response was yes, it is a pilot project and EU funding available for some sites and the SEAI funding will be available for all sites.
- If reaching 50% target, have we got the funding to back up? Yes, there is other funding available.
- There is a lot of path finder projects. Community Climate Action Fund will launch soon.
- It was mentioned about the Biogas Processing Plant in Portlaw in Co. Waterford and a site visit and it was agreed to extend an invitation to the SPC Committee. Lillie will can coordinate once a date agreed.

5. Coastal Erosion Update – George Colfer

George Colfer gave a comprehensive update on all coastal matters which included

- Funding,
- Rosslare Coastal Erosion Flood Relief Scheme,
- Dune Management,
- Economic Assessment and options,
- Seaview Coastal Protection,
- Climate Change Adaptation,
- Challenges ahead.

A lengthy discussion ensued, and the following queries were raised and responded to.

- A query was raised on why New Ross didn't appear to be included in the coastline and similarly Enniscorthy on the Slaney. Although not on the coast they are tidal. The response was that the Wexford Coast goes from Kilmichael Point up to Ballyhack and a foreshore is what is being referred to past New Ross and up to Enniscorthy Slaney.
- Is there any update on the Wexford Town Flood Relief Plan? The response was that Special Projects Section are dealing with this Project.
- The OPW has focussed on hard engineering only, is there any suggestion that they may move from hard to soft engineering and come up with other solutions? Regarding the policy on soft engineering the Dune restoration is considered soft engineering. The OPW are working on an Erosion Policy which will be brought before the Government.
- Have the planning regulations been adapted over the last 10 years to reflect the vulnerability of floodplain and even the houses in general? The new adopted County Development Plan includes a specific chapter on Climate Change, about sustainable cities and green infrastructure.

Motion: Cllr. Jim Moore requested a motion be submitted to the full Council for a Special Meeting on the whole issue about coastal erosion, flooding and rising sea levels as most districts have a problem with losing land or have a flooding problem. This was seconded by Cllr. Donal Kenny.

6. Any Other Business

6(a) Paint Tin Amnesty for Gorey – It was suggested that the holding of an amnesty for household paint tins be considered by the Council at the Recycling Centres. It was agreed to investigate the matter. Currently paint can be only disposed of at Holmestown for a nominal charge.

6(b) Climate Action Emergency Plan – This had been raised at the Gorey District Meeting in light of extreme weather and flooding, can an Emergency Plan to be broken down for each of the districts in relation to Climate Action. Considering a motion is being put forward for a Special Meeting, this is only for noting at this meeting and could be discussed at the Special Meeting. Climate Action Plan will be more specific this time round. Water bodies don't have boundaries in relation to catchment this has been addressed through River Basin Management Plans.

6(c) BER Rating – Joe Ryan was seeking an updated response on the BER Rating on local authority's homes arising from the Ministers request? The response was the Council will be preparing a Climate Action plan next year. There is a retrofit scheme for Council housing stock and a move towards pro-active maintenance. At present maintenance is very re-active. The Council will arrange BER assessment on all our properties. There is currently 4,800 Council houses and many of these were built before 1985 likely with poor BER rating. A full profile of stock can't be given for the different years but the Council is moving onto energy retrofitting, and it this will be included in the Climate Action Plan.

6(d) Wexford County Council Chemical Free Cleaning Product Policy

Sonia Hunt informed the meeting of a plan to remove all chemical-based cleaning products being used in Wexford County Council Offices. Some green cleaning products had been tested, and a supplier has been sought to supply chemical free cleaning products. The environmentally friendly cleaning products will be introduced across the entire network of Council buildings including libraries. The final stage is to formalise it and make this Wexford County Council policy.

Cllr. Mary Farrell thanked everyone and wished everyone a Happy Christmas. The next meeting is scheduled for February/March 2023.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Signed: 
Cathaoirleach

Date: 23/2/23.