

11/4/23 - Full Council Presentation -

Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment Strategic Policy Committee
Minutes of Meeting - Thursday 23rd February 2023 in County Hall, Wexford & Remotely

Cathaoirleach: Cllr. Mary Farrell

Present: Cllr. Leonard Kelly, Cllr. Jim Moore (remotely), Cllr. Donal Kenny (remotely), Cllr. Tom Forde (remotely), Cllr. Maura Bell (remotely), Cllr. Oliver Walsh (remotely), Mr. Danny Forde (PPN Member), Mr. Joe Ryan (Trade Union), Mr. Kevin Molloy (PPN Member remotely), Mr. Allen Holman (PPN Member remotely), Carolyne Godkin Director of Services, Gerry Forde Senior Engineer, Brendan Cooney Senior Executive Scientist, Hugh Maguire Administrative Officer, Melissa Goff Senior Staff Officer, Lillie O' Brien Assistant Staff Officer, Mahon Mc Glynn Assistant Staff Officer, Captain Mick Mahon, Marine Officer, New Ross Port

Apologies: Mr. James Brennan (Agriculture) Mr. John Somers (Construction Industry Federation), Ms. Mary Walsh (Business & Commercial), George Colfer Executive Engineer, Clare Kelly A/Climate change Co-ordinator.

Cllr. Mary Farrell welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2023.

1. Confirmation of Minutes of SPC Meetings held on 29th September 2022 and 17th November 2022

Danny Forde raised a query regarding a coastal erosion/flooding report and why Enniscorthy New Ross and Wexford Towns were not included. G. Forde responded that in April 2021 he presented a full detailed Coastal Strategy for the entire county from Kilpatrick to Duncannon which can be circulated again to the SPC. It was suggested that the Special Projects Section can be requested to give a presentation on Flood Protection for towns at a future SPC Meeting.

Cllr. Jim Moore asked if a date was set for a Special Meeting on issues concerning Coastal Erosion/Flooding & Climate Change. Cllr. Mary Farrell suggested having the Meeting in the morning and followed by the normal Council Meeting afterwards. It was agreed to look at the April Council Meeting to have a Special Meeting in the morning and H. Maguire will liaise with the County Secretary. H. Maguire stated that the motion for the Special Meeting had been approved by the SPC and sent to the County Secretary. Cllr. Jim Moore proposed and Cllr. Donal Kenny seconded the minutes of the meetings.

2. Climate Action Update – Gerry Forde

Gerry Forde gave a brief update on the progress made under the following headings:

- New Climate Action Plan – process starts 6th March 2023
- Climate Change Adaptation Strategy –adopted with continued implementation.
- Energy Efficiency and Monitoring.
- Transport – challenge because of size of vehicles for EV's
- EasyGo Chargers.
- EV Working Group.
- ISO 50001
- Climate Action training – LA staff
- Tree Sub-group

C. Connolly updated the meeting making the following points in relation to Biodiversity matters.

- WCC applied for funding this year for a baseline survey of hedgerows of Co. Wexford under the Heritage Stewardship Fund.

A Request for Quotations (RFQ) was sent out late last year so if successful there will be ecologists in place to undertake the work.

- Tree Policy sub-group - Funding applied for in 2023 under Local Biodiversity Action Fund for a tree & Hedgerow Policy. This is the fund that Catherine McLoughlin manages and she has applied for funding under this scheme for phase 2 of a Wetlands Survey.
- The Council will have Wetlands funding, dune restoration works, Barn Owl Education Resource in conjunction with other Local Authorities and Bird Watch Ireland for 2023.
- C. McLoughlin has applied for Biodiversity training for the Climate Change team.
- 5 sites were planted with trees under the "Pocket Forest Scheme" using a miyawaki method where planting native trees in pockets that grow 10 times faster, sequestering 10 times more carbon. The locations were Bride Street Church, 1,000 trees planted, Ballyfad 1,000 trees planted, Tintern over 2,000 and Gorey District Park with 1,000 native trees and hope to plant in Ferns Centre of Excellence. It is an initiative developed by Richard and David Mulcahy and funded by Californian Philanthropist Des Walsh.

A discussion ensued and following queries raised and answered.

- What is the scope of the Wetlands Survey? C. Connolly said she would check with C. McLoughlin for the Scoping document. Phase 1 Wetlands Survey would be broad and then Phase II more detailed and will be published.
- Scope of Tree Policy? C. Connolly stated that they applied for funding to look at Tree Management, Planting and Education awareness around trees and maintaining them.
- In Bride Street the trees are so close within 50cm of each other and also out towards Kerlogue. In 2018 Oak and Beech were planted too close and after 5/6 years growth was stunted, should they be planted further apart? The response was that according to a Japanese Ecologist, the miyawaki method which is densely planted native trees in urban areas, has proven through research that they sequester more carbon dioxide. In forestry more thinning is involved.
- This is a Pilot Project for Wexford and higher biodiversity and less carbon dioxide.

3. Coastal Matters – Gerry Forde

Gerry Forde gave a presentation to the Committee giving a brief overview on Coastal Matters which included;

- Damage to beach access at Kilpatrick
- St. Helen's Preliminary Erosion Assessment
- Rosslare CEFRS
- Dune Restoration
- Challenges

4. Litter Management – Hugh Maguire

Hugh Maguire gave a presentation on Litter Management Activities in 2022 and an outline of trends and activities which included the following matters;

- National Litter Pollution Survey & Quantification Results.
- Definition of Litter.
- Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) Results.
- Four Strands Approach.
- Enforcement Activity
- Litter Prevention & Control.

- Environment Education & Awareness Activities.
- Community Involvement & Partnership.
- Cost of Litter Management Activities.
- Litter Management Plan Priority Areas for 2023.
- Litter and Waste Action Sub-Committee Meeting.

The following queries were raised and responded to;

- With 229 fines issued, what percentage of fines were paid? The response was that 55-60% are paid and of those, 43 were successful in court and more to be heard. It takes a couple of months to be heard in court. Some get appealed also and may have moved away. 70-75% are either paid or successfully prosecuted overall.
- Bicycle lanes in Gorey – a street sweeping machines could sweep by the kerbs but can't because of bicycle lanes and there is a lot of cigarette butts, papers gathering and green growth on it now. While encouraging bicycle lanes, have we a machine that fits the 1m wide or do we have to do manual labour? H. Maguire responded that he will speak to Gorey District to see if there is machinery that can be used to clean up the lanes.
- Green dog walker scheme is it still active? The answer was that It is still current and applications can be made through the website.
- A query was raised about COVID-19 and the type of litter resulting. Is there a difference in the types of litter? The response was that there isn't as many masks now. The main problems include Black bags dumped in countryside, woodlands, at beaches or up lanes. A lot of roadside litter also and Environment are trying to address that.
- Could the Council run a scheme based on Anti-litter Ambassadors? At an early meeting it had been brought up about looking into new campaign to highlight issues and seeing what other Counties are doing and bring back ideas so this could be included for consideration,

5. Solid Fuel Regulations 2022 – Brendan Cooney

Brendan Cooney gave a presentation on Air pollution and the main legislative provisions on the new Solid Fuel Regulations that came into effect on 31st October 2022 which also highlighted the roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority in this regard.

The following queries were raised, and points made.

- The Air Monitoring Station in Talbot Green appears to be out of action – the response was that it is has been removed and decommissioned. The EPA have taken over and have one in the High Street car park in Wexford.
- Traditional turf cutting rights apply in some areas but the turf can't be sold..
- All of the Country was designated a low smoke zone. Air quality - this is not just fireplaces but petrol and diesel cars have health impact. Cardiovascular problems are the biggest health problem. The Department is installing all monitoring stations in the country.
- Campaign for retrofitting has been introduced.
- Is the Council obliged to monitor CO2? Yes but it doesn't have resources to measure all targets but until we get resources smoky coal will have a bigger impact. 12 months to see what resources are needed,

Motion: Prepare a Motion to bring to the full Council asking the EPA and the Department to be requested to provide funding for a pilot project for additional air monitoring stations in Wexford Town. H. Maguire to send it out to SPC and so it can be put forward for March Meeting. Joe Ryan proposed, and Danny Forde seconded it.

6. Harbour Charges – Capt. Mick Mahon, Marine Officer

Capt. Mick Mahon gave a presentation on Wexford Ports, Harbours and Marinas Harbour Charges outlining the following.

- Coastal Summary
- Piers & Harbours Activities
- Staffing Structure
- Navigation App
- Challenges/Opportunities
- Schedule of charges including an increase for non-pilot commercial boats in NR.

The following queries were raised and answered, and points made.

- Is there still a register for the registration of crafts and is there a charge? The response was yes there is an official register.
- Is there a list of abandoned crafts and if so, can they be removed as they are very unsightly? A bit like litter it takes a long time to chase them down but they are being followed up.
- Access to rivers have become difficult particularly with the Slaney – Is this an issue for the Council? The Council primarily deal with Piers and Harbours.
- One of the charges in relation to New Ross port for non-pilot commercial vessels – don't require a pilot – introduce charges of €100 each way. Try to encourage sharing in port area charges are low compared to other ports. Charters have fallen and look to increase activity and spread the charges. Fishing vessels that are registered in Wexford town are already paying charges and would not be charged again.
- Haven't increased any energy charges since 2016 – can't afford to keep level of services unless increase.
- How many non-piloted commercial vessels entering New Ross – only about 2.
- How many do not need assistance? The response was 20 max.
- It was agreed to bring back to the full council that the SPC agreed with the charge of ~~€100.~~

7. Any Other Business

Danny Forde suggested that progress was slow with the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and more significant measures need to be taken. The Response to the query was that there is currently much focus on Climate Adaptation but that Climate Mitigation (reducing greenhouse gases) needs much more discussion and training and will feature significantly in the new Climate Action Plan for Wexford County Council. A special meeting could be arranged – 11/4/23. concerning this area. Cllr. Mary Farrell thanked everyone in attendance and remotely. The next SPC meeting is scheduled for 27th April 2023.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Signed: Mary Farrell
Cathaoirleach

Date: 27-4-2023.