

**Minutes of Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Action SPC Meeting**  
**held on Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2020 - Online meeting**

**Present:** **SPC Members:** Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald, (*Chair*), Cllr. Breda Brennan, Cllr. Damien Geoghegan, Cllr. Joe Kelly, Cllr. John Hearne, Cllr. Susan Gallagher, Mr. Tom Hogan, Ms. Brid O’Hehir, and Ms. Obianuju Ekedozi.

**Officials:** Mr. Fergus Galvin, Director of Services.  
Mr. Raymond Moloney, S.E.O.  
Mr. Luke O’Brien, A.O.  
Mr. Niall Kane, S.E.E  
Ms. Deirdre Moore, A.S.O.  
Ms. Ella Ryan, Environmental Awareness Officer

**Apologies:** Ms. Laura O’Brien-Forbes, Cllr. Jim Griffin, Cllr. Ger Barron, and Ms. Siobhán McCarthy, S.O.

**Resignation:** Mr. Alan Walshe, PPN.

Cllr. Fitzgerald thanked the members for attending and welcomed Cllr. Susan Gallagher who was replacing Cllr. Laura Swift. The Chair noted the apologies received and resignation of Mr. Alan Walshe, and thanked him for his contribution to the SPC. F. Galvin, DoS advised the PPN had been requested to appoint a new representative by the next meeting. The business of the meeting then proceeded.

1. **Minutes of Meeting held on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

The Minutes of January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting were proposed by Cllr. D. Geoghegan, seconded by Mr. T. Hogan, and agreed.

• **Matters Arising**

No issues arising from previous meeting.

3. **RMCEI 2019/2020**

N. Kane, SEE presented the Annual RMCEI 2019-2020 which reviewed the previous year’s work and set out a plan of inspections and actions for the coming year. The local authority’s annual targets are then assessed by the EPA. In preparing the Plan he stated that the Council had to identify the resources available and allocate to the various targets, taking into consideration the priorities and risks. The national priorities were broken down into Water, Waste and Air categories with each section being further broken down in his detailed presentation.

N. Kane, SEE outlined the various inspections that had taken place, however due to Covid 19 restrictions in place, the plan will need to be reviewed as it was not possible to achieve all the targets set. B. O’Hehir asked about coastal and drinking water inspections and if N. Kane’s presentation could be circulated to the members. F. Galvin, DoS stated that drinking water was dealt with under a separate metric by Irish Water. Chair, Cllr. P. Fitzgerald queried the number of septic tank inspections with F. Galvin, DoS advising 24, which is the figure from the EPA. He stated this was a high risk area but a number of the issues were resolved with the householder through advice and the grant scheme which allows people to apply to upgrade their system. The means test had also been lifted and this may incentivise people to upgrade their systems.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald thanked N. Kane, SEE for his informative presentation and it was agreed it to circulate to the members.

4. **EPA Water Quality in Ireland Report**

F. Galvin, DoS presented the EPA Water Quality in Ireland Report for 2013 – 2018 which involved a considerable amount of work and invited members to watch a video on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) to date. It outlined:

- The benefits of good water quality
- How water was assessed into five categories with five strategy categories.
- Significant pressures on water – agriculture, hydromorphology, urban wastewater and forestry.

- Plan prioritised actions for over 700 water bodies and established the LA Water Programme (LAWPRO) and Agricultural, Sustainability, Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP)

He stated that local authorities work in conjunction with the Department, EPA, LAWPRO and ASSAP. There are numerous areas he would like to see prioritised and as a region all of the agencies were currently working together on short listing water bodies as priority areas for action in the next cycle of the WFD. The formation of the next cycle of the WFD would include regional based workshops, public consultation process for all action plans –Covid 19 dependent – before the 2022 – 2027 Plan could be finalised.

Cllr Brennan queried the increase in nitrates and phosphate, with F. Galvin, DoS advising the increased intensification of herds over the last 8 – 10 years had affected it. However this was not as much an issue for Waterford as it was for other counties. T. Hogan queried the mitigation measures being implemented. F. Galvin, DoS advised that LAWPRO was doing significant work around sampling and that 30 plus new advisors had been appointed by Teagasc to assist improving the management of herds and run off land. How we engage with farmers and the wider public would ensure farm practices are maximised to minimise impact.

Cllr. Fitzgerald welcomed these new measures and felt since the elimination of milk quotas, Leinster/Munster, water quality has more or less remained the same. However local authorities and industry need to also accept responsibility. He asked if more inspectors could be appointed by the local authority. F. Galvin, DoS advised that a business case was being made to the Department to allocate additional resources to allow for more inspections and further actions. To inspect, implement and prosecute required considerable resources and there were currently only 7.5 people on a fulltime basis across all the local authorities. Cllr. Fitzgerald asked if a motion should be brought to Council but F. Galvin, DoS said the business proposal was on a national basis and was confident it would be successful.

T. Hogan queried the effects of forestry. F. Galvin advised the trees were not the issue but the impact of cutting, felling and harvesting caused disturbance in the soil and run off which impacts on aquatic life.

Cllr. Fitzgerald thanked F. Galvin, DoS and stated it was important the public are made aware of this report. He said previously there were updates in the Management Report on this issue. F. Galvin advised that once the draft list of priority areas for action in the next WFD cycle was complete in early 2021, there would be public consultation on the matter and he agreed to provide an update to the SPC in early 2021.

## **5. Draft Litter Management Plan**

F. Galvin, DoS stated the Litter Management Plan was a statutory plan which was being presented today for approval of the SPC to agree to the required public consultation process take place. He requested N. Kane, SEE to present the plan and proposals contained therein.

N. Kane, SEE said the Plan set out Waterford's issues and how they were being addressed and proposed measures for the 2021-2024 Plan. It was important to try and encourage compliance and Ella Ryan, Environmental Awareness Officer had done considerable educational work on some the issues. There had been various initiatives introduced to try and combat the problem area - Waste Presentation Byelaws, Environmental Inspector carrying out inspections with fines being issued, premises being encouraged to keep the area outside their buildings clean, street cleaning etc.

R. Moloney, SEO outlined the public process with a view to the plan being adopted in early 2021. T. Hogan asked if there was any significant change from previous plan with E. Ryan advising that Coastal and Marine Litter and Sea Campaign were being included for the first time. Cllr. P. Fitzgerald said the area is full of coffee cups and queried their obligation for disposal. N. Kane, SEE stated we all have a responsibility and the requirement is set out in the legislation.

F. Galvin, DoS stated the government intended to introduce a plastic bottle deposit return scheme and will be looking at the issue of coffee cups. Cllr. Kelly queried if the government had any plan to ban coffee cups, or allow only fully reusable or compostable? F. Galvin, DoS said either a ban or levy would be imposed on non recyclable cups. Tramore had been operating a successful scheme on compostable/reusable cups and felt that businesses may look at giving a reduction if customers had a reusable cup. It would be both cost saving for the consumer and retailer. R. Moloney, SEO stated there is a section in the Waste Action Plan dealing with single use plastics with a view to eventual full ban on disposal cups. Cllr. Gallagher stated that while the focus is on

coffee cups, there is an issue with disposable masks; is there any promotion to encourage the use of reusable masks? E. Ryan said there was a social campaign for reusable but that we can push it again on social media channels.

Cllr. Hearne raised the issue of a house in an estate which was unkempt and a significant amount of rubbish there and queried if the local authority can insist they clean up the area. F. Galvin, DoS said they can and do work closely with the Housing Department in trying to resolve multifaceted problems.

Cllr. Fitzgerald asked if the members were happy for the Draft Litter Management Plan to proceed to public consultation stage with all members agreeing. He thanked N. Kane, SEE for his presentation.

## **6. Air Quality**

N. Kane, SEE presented the Air Quality Report detailing the various sources of air pollution namely home heating, transport - diesel and agriculture – air pollution. He outlined measures like the smoky coal ban and had now been extended to Tramore but Dungarvan being excluded from same. He said enforcement of the various regulations eg. Petroleum Vapour, Deco-Paint and Solvent Regulations were in place and fines can be issued for non compliance.

Three monitors had been installed by the EPA in order to give an Air Quality Index on Browns Road, Dungarvan Courthouse and in the Waterford Quay area. Cllr. Kelly enquired how petrol stations and car sprayers are monitored and is it enforced at local level to ensure compliance. N. Kane, SEE advised while inspections are carried out by WCCC, these are independently done by an approved assessor, copy of report forwarded to local authority and cost borne by the business. The various businesses have a monitoring system in place to avoid petrol leaks. A similar assessment is also carried out for dry cleaners. He stated that the results from Brownes Road were good, the Courthouse monitor was being recalibrated and results were not available and the Quay having poor results.

T. Hogan felt the smog was very bad with a mask being required for pollutants. He queried how accurate a picture one monitor would get. There were several queries on the monitors by the members and the following issues were raised:

- Effectiveness of the monitors and the locations chosen.
- The number of monitors for the various locations.
- Actual location of monitor for the Dungarvan area.
- From the reports how accurate a picture did it give?
- Criteria for the chosen locations.

N. Kane, SEE stated the EPA chose these locations, with a view to getting a general picture. He stated the monitors were placed in locations subject to the EPA criteria eg. not to be placed near petrol stations, placed in suburban areas and on higher sites. Cllr. Gallagher asked if it was possible to get 14 day readings and longer readings. N. Kane, SEE advised all details are available on the EPA website. Cllr. Hearne asked about the involvement with schools as they were clogged up with cars eg. walking trains – were these projects ever moved on. E. Ryan advised that she was working continuously with schools on travel by encouraging cycling, walking to school/walking bus which were all part of the Green Flag initiative.

Cllr. Fitzgerald thanked N. Kane, SEE for his presentation.

## **6. Climate Action Progress Report.**

F. Galvin, DoS requested R. Moloney, SEO to present the Climate Action Progress Report. R. Moloney, SEO said the 5 year Climate Action Plan was adopted in September 2019 with an annual progress report being given to the Plenary Council and the SPC. He outlined the various objectives and goals in the Plan, but advised due to Covid it had been a difficult year to attain these. He said that while a considerable number of actions would and were delivered others will be included in:

- Climate Action integrated in to the Corporate Plan. Business Case being made by the LGMA for Climate Action Officers in Local Authorities.
- New Development Plan – land use – green infrastructure.
- Water Services.
- Biodiversity – reduction in pesticides and use of sustainable substance, Information Boards on coastal paths etc. with 2 Green Park Flags being awarded to WCCC

- Coastal Flooding/Erosion – Retention of 5 Blue Flags for 2020 with funding received for specific projects in Dungarvan and Tramore.

He stated this was the start to the 5 Year Programme and a report would be going to the Plenary Council over the coming months.

Cllr. Kelly said the Pollinator Plan had been hugely successful with the public commenting on how well place looked. B. O’Hehir asked if was possible to propose a PPN member for the Climate Action Committee with R. Moloney, SEO advising that this would be an in-house committee who would look at the actions and report back to the SPC where the PPN would then have input. The issue of tree cutting was discussed with R. Moloney advising that surplus lands in Council ownership could avail of a grant from Coillte to create woodlands and this would be looked at on a regional basis.

Cllr. Fitzgerald stated it was good to see that regardless of Covid, the plan was going ahead and was good news. He thanked R. Moloney for his report and hoped the Plan would go ahead next year.

### **8. Date of Next Meeting**

F. Galvin, DoS stated that there would be one meeting between this and Christmas in either November/December which would be online. B. O’Hehir queried if the Draft Litter Plan be completed by end of November with R. Moloney, SEO advised that if advertised in coming week and in submission period, it would be completed.

It was agreed that November 25<sup>th</sup> be set as a provisional date for the next SPC meeting.

### **8. Any Other Business**

Cllr. Fitzgerald said he should have at the outset of the meeting congratulated Marc O’Cathasaigh on his election to Dail Eireann and wished him well in his new role.

**B. O’Hehir:** Requested that once minutes are adopted that they are sent to the PPN. She asked if it would be possible for an update on norovirus at the next meeting.

**T. Hogan:** Queried a Notice of Motion on the Wexford-Waterford-Limerick Corridor which he requested for inclusion at this meeting but had been referred to the Transport & Infrastructure for consideration. F. Galvin, DoS said it was in the remit of T&I SPC was to examine and take cognisance of sustainable transport, providing options into the future. He said the motion submitted by Mr. Hogan sat better under that SPC umbrella as it crosses over all parts of the organisation. Cllr.’s Fitzgerald, Kelly and Brennan supported Mr. Hogan on this motion and that a discussion on this should take place at the next Environment SPC. The Chair asked for a 20 minute discussion on this at the next SPC.

F. Galvin, DoS said it would placed on the next Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Action SPC Meeting and that as the metro strategy would be looked at over the next 12 months to refer to T&I also.

Cllr. Fitzgerald thanked the members for attending and for a very good meeting and hoped to see everyone at the next meeting on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**Signed:**

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**Chair,  
Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Action SPC**

**Date:**

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