



Minutes of Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Action SPC Meeting
held on 10th October 2023 – Online Meeting

Present

SPC Members: Cllr. John Hearne (*Chair*), Cllr. Jim Griffin, Cllr. Ger Barron, Cllr. Damien Geoghegan, Cllr. Joeanne Bailey, Cllr. Joe Kelly, Cllr. Cristiona Kiely, Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald, Mr. Thomas Hogan, Ms. Ithel McKenna, Ms. Mary Greene. Ms. Laura Forbes O'Brien,

Officials: Mr. Fergus Galvin, Director of Services, Ms. Dawn Wallace, S.E.O., Ms. Grainne Kennedy, Climate Action Co-Ordinator, Mr. Anthony Russell, A.O., Ms. Ella Ryan, Environmental Awareness, Ms. Siobhán McCarthy, S.O.

Apologies: Mr. Niall Kane, S.E.E.

Cllr. Hearne welcomed the members and noted the apologies received.

1. Draft Climate Action Plan (pre Design)

G. Kennedy outlined the main objectives of the Plan including timeline, details of pre-consultation and Council team consultation. The Draft Plan will be available to the public from 25th October and will be launched at the Imagine Festival. There are multiple events planned in the County which will also be used as an opportunity to provide advice e.g. on energy saving. The Draft Plan will be available on-line and in Libraries.

Gráinne provided an explanation on how greenhouse gas emissions are measured.

Action: Gráinne to circulate the Energy Booklet to the SPC Members.

Cllr. Fitzgerald raised concerns about the difficulties increasing energy ratings on old Council owned buildings e.g. City Hall and council owned equipment and machinery, by the target date of 2030.

F. Galvin highlighted some ongoing and existing changes in relation to machinery and vehicles

- The move to electric vehicles for which costs are comparing favourably.
- Larger vehicles are now trialling HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable oil).
- Some vehicle manufacturers are now working on retrofitting vehicles to hydrogen power.

F. Galvin acknowledged that it is unlikely some buildings will reach an A3/B2 BER rating. There are a number of upgrades planned including, roof insulation, passive double glazing and non-fossil fuel heating for existing buildings. Menapia and Dungarvan have good energy ratings. For all listed buildings, work will be undertaken which is sensitive to the character of each building.

Cllr. Barron queried interactions between the Council and the Councils of the three adjoining Counties – Tipperary, Cork and Kilkenny.

- Other Local Authorities are involved in a similar process to Waterford. There will be collaborations e.g. schemes to prevent flooding, etc. Tipperary's Plan is out for consultation and Waterford Council has an opportunity to comment.

Ms. McKenna asked how the public consultation will work, suggesting the public may feel there is little they can do to help.

- The consultation process is an opportunity for the public to comment and give input. It also provides an opportunity to speak with individual communities. This is an opportunity to introduce people to what is in the plan. Schools across the County have been offered the opportunity to have presentations to their School Assemblies.

Cllr. Kelly asked about funding for the retrofitting of buildings and new vehicles.

- The Capital Plan adopted earlier this year included funding for upgrades to buildings. The Council will also apply for grants e.g. for major building energy efficiency upgrades. Capital funding is matching grant aid. Some plant and vehicles will be replaced by outright purchase. The Council will continue to lease vehicles and the savings will be long term from reduced use of diesel.
- Retrofitting of Housing Stock will need 4 to 5 times more funding from the Department over the next 7 to 10 years.
- Funding for retro-fitting Housing Stock is included in the Capital Programme. Housing stock ranges in age and there are a range of energy ratings. The cost of bringing a house up to standard will depend on the age and type of building.

Cllr. Griffin asked about how the lighting programme ties into the draft Climate Action Plan in relation to carbon reduction and raised the issue of public lighting not working in the Tramore area.

- The new LED retrofit project is on-going but slower than anticipated and behind schedule. The Council is part of the Cork/Limerick/Clare/Kerry grouping. A full inventory of all the poles was completed a month ago. If design proposals are acceptable to Council, they will be signed-off and retrofitting will commence in 2024. Lighting is the biggest constituent of the Council's electricity costs. The aim is to reduce usage through the Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project (PLEEP) upgrade which will achieve 10% /12% of the overall 50% reduction goal.
- In relation to issues with lighting, maintenance of the underground system is time consuming as the problem may be caused by old cabling which, in some cases, is 40 to 50 years old. The new LED lower wattage will put less pressure on the cables. There will be a new maintenance contract when the current work is completed.

Cllr. Griffin requested details a contact for KLS (Killaree Lighting Services) and ESB.

- F. Galvin - Kieran Woods is the liaison person with KLS.

T. Hogan questioned the basis for the emissions reduction figures (50% transport emissions reduction and 10% emissions reduction in active travel by 2030).

- The 10% reduction is based on people who travel short distances by car switching to walking, cycling, etc. Government have set a national target for electric vehicles, and this is the basis for the 14k figure for electric vehicles in the Waterford Plan. This target is not within Council control. It requires manufacturers not producing internal combustion engines and people moving to electric vehicles, bus or bicycle.

T. Hogan asked about the connection between Local Authorities on the numbers of charging points and their locations.

- Charging point numbers and locations are co-ordinated on a regional basis.

T. Hogan asked about the change of land use in relation to emissions and questioned whether there is enough re-planting in the commercial sector.

- G Kennedy gave an overview of the impact of increasing woodlands and forestry. The information came from a report prepared for the Council by Southeast Energy Agency which provided a snapshot. Information on commercial replanting would be a question for Coillte.

T. Hogan asked what is the National average rating for BER and whether there is a plan to increase this?

- C2 is the average rating. Many people have availed of grants.

T. Hogan raised the issue of people who do not live in social housing who will not be able to afford upgrades.

- The 'Warmer Home Scheme' is open to anyone in receipt of the fuel allowance. It is possible to get more than one item done at a time e.g. wall insulation and roof insulation. €30k is the estimate for works up to the most energy efficient. A person could apply every 4 to 5 years for individual grants.

T. Hogan expressed concern that making individual householders responsible for retrofits was not an appropriate response to the climate emergency. He suggested that whole estates should be targeted, one street at a time. The failure rate of 45% on work carried out (based on low number of properties retrofitted) indicates that the work should be done on a national level.

Ms. McKenna suggested that people don't cycle to work or cycle short journeys because it is too dangerous, particularly in the City, as there is no enforcement on the use of cycle lanes.

Cllr. Hearne mentioned some work carried out by the Lismore Park/Belvedere/Lisduggan Residents Association last weekend and said support in the upcoming budget for some funds to further this work would be deeply appreciated. Ms. McKenna Garden Centres will donate any leftover bulbs in November.

F. Galvin asked that everyone encourage public participation. He asked the PPN Members present to raise awareness within their own groupings. Following public consultation relevant submissions will be added and a new Draft Plan ready for January of next year.

Cllr. Hearne thanked the Councillors, Community Representatives and Executive for attending and concluded the business of the meeting.

The SPC agreed that the draft plan should go to Plenary Council.

Signed: John Hearne.
Chair,
Environment, Climate Action & Biodiversity SPC

Date: 27th November 2021

