

Minutes of Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Action SPC Meeting
held on 14th February 2023 - Online meeting

Present: **SPC Members:** Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald, (*Chair*), Cllr. Jim Griffin, Cllr. Ger Barron, Cllr. John Hearne, Cllr. Joanne Bailey, Cllr. Christina Kiely, Cllr. Damien Geoghegan, Mr. Tom Hogan, Ms. Ithel McKenna, Ms. Laura Forbes O'Brien, Ms. Mary Greene.

Officials: Mr. Fergus Galvin, Director of Services, Mr. Raymond Moloney, Senior Executive Officer, Mr. Anthony Russell, Administrative Officer, Mr. Niall Kane, Senior Executive Engineer, Ms. Grainne Kennedy, Climate Action Co-Ordinator, Ms. Ella Ryan, Environmental Awareness Officer, Ms. Siobhán McCarthy, Staff Officer, Ms. Susan Lee, Community Climate Action Officer.

Also Present: Prof. John Wenger, School of Chemistry, UCC, Ms. Róisín Byrne, School of Chemistry, UCC.

Apologies: Cllr. Joe Kelly

Cllr. Fitzgerald welcomed the members and thanked them for attending.

Cllr. Fitzgerald welcomed new SPC member, Mary Greene, who replaces former SPC member Brid O'Hehir.

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 22nd November 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2022 were proposed by Cllr. J. Griffin and seconded by I. McKenna.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Life Emerald Air Pollution Monitoring Project

The Life Emerald Air Pollution Monitoring Project is a collaboration between Waterford City & County Council and University College Cork. N. Kane, SEE outlined the background to the project and introduced Prof. John Wenger and R. Byrne from the School of Chemistry, UCC.

Prof. J. Wenger outlined the project is currently undertaking research into air quality monitoring. Air quality forecasts will form part of weather forecasts in the future.

R. Byrne is a PhD student in the School of Chemistry, UCC. The Life Emerald project is concentrated on emission modelling and forecasting of air quality in Ireland. They are working with the EPA also. The project uses low cost sensors called Purple Air. There are 7 of these sensors located in schools in Dungarvan. There are 18 clarity sensors located in Dungarvan attached to street poles.

A survey is currently being conducted on solid fuel use in residential areas. It is planned to continue monitoring solid fuels emissions until the summer.

Cllr. J. Griffin said he has noticed the new solid fuel regulations has led to an increase in people burning poorer quality timber. Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked what age groups in schools are being targeted for the survey? One of the concerns is the cost of smokeless fuel. For some, consistent fuel poverty is huge.

R. Byrne said parents are answering the survey and that the project is not giving out about anyone using solid fuels.

Prof. J. Wenger said the monitors are being used in Cork also. Night-time pollution is high. The monitors are used to pick up hotspots of pollution. The focus is on particulate emissions. The survey will help with showing who and when is burning what type of fuel.

Cllr. J. Bailey asked about the range of the devices and how far away will they will pick up emissions? Are they just being used in the Dungarvan area or will they extended to Waterford City and Tramore to compare and contrast?

R. Byrne said this winter 15 sensors were installed in Edenderry and this winter the sensors were installed in Dungarvan also which is coastal and a comparison will be done between the two locations. It is not proposed to install any more sensors as part of the project.

I. McKenna spoke about historical data and asked if past data can be compared to new data to see if the new solid fuel regulations have made a difference since they took effect?

Prof. J. Wenger said there was no measures taken in Dungarvan previously. They are installed one year at the courthouse in Dungarvan. They are finding similarities across towns and Dungarvan is lucky to have fresh air from the sea due to its coastal location.

Cllr. G. Barron joined the meeting and gave his apologies for being late as he had technical difficulties joining the meeting.

Prof. J. Wenger said the pollution hotspots were Ennis, Letterkenny and Tramore. Waterford is not most polluted. It is mid table.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald expressed his thanks to Prof. J. Wenger and R. Byrne for their presentation.

Prof. J. Wenger said there was fantastic work undertaken by Paul M. Flynn, Environmental Enforcement Inspector as part of the project on the ground. The project can be sold as a good news story.

4. Climate Change in the Irish Mind

G. Kennedy, Climate Action Co-Ordinator made a presentation and said the EPA study contained Waterford specific data. The EPA interviewed thousands of people to see what they were worried about when it comes to climate change. It emerged from the study that 83% of people in Waterford are worried about climate change. 7 questions were asked in the study. 96% of respondents believe climate change is happening.

G. Kennedy, Climate Action Co-Ordinator outlined that the public can in engage in 4 ways in relation to climate action in 2023. The statutory process for preparing the Climate Action Plan commences next month. There are lots of opportunities for people in Waterford to contribute as to what should be done in their area. The slides for the presentation will be circulated to members.

F. Galvin, Director of Services said there is a surprising level of knowledge and engagement out there and that there is a large interest amongst the public on the subject.

G. Kennedy, Climate Action Co-Ordinator said this is the first wide reaching survey on the topic. The survey contains questions on erosion and flooding also and people have lots of concerns around it.

5. Community Climate Action Fund

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald welcomed S. Lee, Community Climate Action Officer who gave a presentation on the Community Climate Action Fund. The Community Climate Action Fund is contained under Strand 1 of the Community Climate Action Programme. As part of the consultation process undertaken by the department 40,000 people were surveyed. The Community Climate Action Programme emerged to support climate action at a local level by local communities. The Community Climate Action Programme is funded by €60m from the Climate Action Fund. €30m is allocated over the next 18 months for the two strands.

Strand 1: Action: Building low carbon economies €24m. Strand 1A: Shared Island Community Climate Action €3m. Strand 2: Education: Climate Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing €5m Pobal, Creative Climate Action €1m (Creative Ireland Programme).

In Strand 1 WCCC were allocated €564,000 for the next 18 months. In Strand 1A there is no specific allocation.

S. Lee, Community Climate Action Officer outlined the project eligibility criteria for Strand 1 and 1A. Strand 1A can be applied for by a national community and environmental organisation or by a not for profit organisation and must be located in the functional area of WCCC.

There are 3 project sizes. Small scale projects for projects valued at less than €20,000, medium scale projects for projects valued in the range of €20,000 to €50,000 and large scale projects for projects valued in the range of €51,000 to €100,000.

There are five programme themes. Home/energy, food and waste, shopping & recycling, travel and local climate & environmental action.

S. Lee, Community Climate Action Officer, outlined how communities can apply. There is a 10 week window in which to apply until 19th May. Applicants can contact the Community Climate Action Officer for more information on applying. Letters of Offer to successful applicants will issue in October or November.

Cllr. J. Griffin said it is great to see this level of funding available and asked if the presentation can be sent out to members? He said should we look at having less cars going to areas such as Mahon Falls etc. to reduce levels of car pollution.

S. Lee, Community Climate Action Officer said she is happy to meet with communities and engage with them regarding applying for the fund.

I. McKenna asked if a community want to do something e.g. wetlands/forest can a project be on private property e.g. areas that will be made available for community use? S. Lee, Community Climate Action Officer, said a project will have to be on public property. The department has to come back with further clarity. The rules around leasing will have to be determined also. This will be known by the beginning of March.

Cllr. J. Hearne said it is a great initiative.

S. Lee, Community Climate Action Officer, said there is a possibility of grouping smaller projects together. It could be a suite of projects.

R. Moloney, SEO, said S. Lee and G. Kennedy will be launching the fund in the next two weeks in the East and West of the county. He encouraged PPN members to attend the launches.

6. National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy

F. Galvin, Director of Services gave a presentation on the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy. Local authorities are required to make waste management plans for their areas and review them at least every 6 years. Ireland has the lowest rate of circular material use in Europe. The plan provides for 0% new waste growth. There is an increased focus on the non-domestic sector such as construction and demolition waste. In real terms, it would mean a reduction in line with growth in the economy.

The plan is presented in 5 volumes. The next steps are public consultation, plan revision and presentation to and adoption by Council. It is an executive function at present to adopt the waste management plan but there will be opportunities for input from elected members.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked if the consultation will be taking place nationally or locally? F. Galvin, Director of Services, said it will be put out nationally and WCCC will have a role in the development of the plan.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked if WCCC must adopt a national plan or a local plan? F. Galvin, Director of Services, said it is now a national issue. It is a function of each local authority to adopt a waste management plan. The Council will not be handling any structures around submissions.

Cllr. J. Bailey asked if the circular economy outlined in the plan relates to just waste or does it include other areas e.g. events in communities? F. Galvin, Director of Services, said it looks at the circular economy in its entirety and looks at reuse and repair workshops, recycling and upcycling on a smaller scale. Cllr. J. Bailey asked if we could look at installing a water station in John Robert's Square? F. Galvin, Director of Services, said it can be looked at it however there is a risk of vandalism occurring in the small hours of the morning. It works well on the greenway.

7. Incentivised Waste Collection Charging in the Commercial Sector

N. Kane, SEE made a presentation on Incentivised Waste Collection Charging in the Commercial Sector. Approximately 70% of the material in the black bin could be diverted to recycling or composting. The Waste Framework Directive sets targets for recycling. A draft statutory instrument has been prepared but has not yet been adopted.

The target date for new permit conditions to come into effect is 1st July 2023. Local authorities will enforce the new requirements.

Cllr. J. Griffin said questions must be asked about how waste operators are performing their duties. Wheelie bins being left on footpaths are a very contentious issue at community meetings. There are a cohort of people who will not take their bins in off the footpath. These bins are a blight on locations where efforts are being made to make areas more attractive.

Cllr. J. Bailey said in relation to bin collections there are too many bins such as brown bins and black bins and she is finding some people are putting waste out together into the one bin. People might not request a brown bin because of the costs involved.

N. Kane, SEE said it is possible to get a bin lorry with two different compartments. It is an offence to mix waste. N. Kane, SEE said Environment can look at bins being left out on the street in Doyle Street. Environmental Enforcement Inspectors do spot checks on businesses to ensure that they have brown bins. Our inspectors call to the food businesses every year.

T. Hogan welcomed the fact that the commercial sector will be regulated the same as the domestic sector. T. Hogan then enquired as to what happened with his motion to have one operator for waste collection? His proposal is to make waste collection more efficient and in line with what happens in Europe. R. Moloney, SEO said it was sent to CPG for consideration and it will be followed up.

Cllr. C. Kiely asked if we can implement a timetable for when bin companies can collect waste in different areas e.g. on a particular street on a particular day. Bin trucks from different companies are driving up and down the same streets every day and she asked if we can have bin companies collect on a group of streets on a particular day e.g. on a Monday so that they would not be on the street until the following Monday. N. Kane, SEE said he was not sure if we could do that but that it can probably be done through bye-laws. Consultation was undertaken with regard to disposable coffee cups. A 20c levy will be introduced shortly on disposable coffee cups in April.

8. Date of Next Meeting

R. Moloney, SEO advised the SPC that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 9th May 2023.

9. Correspondence

No correspondence was received.

10. Any Other Business

- I. McKenna asked if it was possible to receive the draft minutes of the SPC sooner.
- Cllr. J. Griffin noted that R. Moloney, SEO, is retiring shortly and wished him well in his retirement and asked who would be replacing him? Cllr. P. Fitzgerald said he supported the sentiments expressed by Cllr. J. Griffin. He said R. Moloney was 39 years with the Council and he wished him all the best in his retirement and thanked him for all his help over the years. R. Moloney, SEO, thanked members for their good wishes and said he is finishing up on Friday, 17th February. He advised that N. Kane, SEE, would be taking over from him initially.

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

Signed: _____

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

Date: _____