

Minutes of Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Action SPC Meeting
held on 14th June 2022 - Online meeting

Present: **SPC Members:** Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald, (*Chair*), Cllr. Joe Kelly, Cllr. Jim Griffin, Cllr. Ger Barron, Cllr. John Hearne, Cllr. Joanne Bailey, Cllr. Christina Kiely, Mr. Tom Hogan, Ms. Ithel McKenna, Cllr. Damien Geoghegan.

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. Ella Ryan, Environmental Awareness Officer, Ms. Siobhán McCarthy, S.O., Ms. Deirdre Moore, A.S.O.

Apologies: Ms. Brid O'Hehir and Ms. Laura Forbes O'Brien.

Absent: Obianuju Ekedozie

Cllr. Fitzgerald welcomed the members and thanked them for attending and proceeded to note the apologies received. He then proceeded with the business of the meeting.

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 8th March 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2022 were proposed by Cllr. J. Griffin seconded by Cllr. G. Barron and agreed.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

3. Climate Action Update

F. Galvin, Director of Services proceeded with the Climate Action update. He advised since March update, designation had been sought for Waterford City to be one of the 100 European carbon neutral smart cities by 2030 but regretfully the application was unsuccessful, with Dublin and Cork being the cities selected from Ireland. WCCC will endeavour to partner with Cork and Dublin on some of their projects. He had a meeting with the Head of the Irish Delegation to the European Commission and got feedback on other potential European wide climate programmes. While a setback, WCCC is committed to delivering our programme and is looking at other vehicles to realise our ambitions. The Climate Action Team has been advertised; applications received and are currently awaiting departmental approval for sanction of staff recruitment.

I. McKenna, PPN asked if the Climate Action staff had been appointed and F. Galvin, DoS advised a new Climate Action Co-Ordinator for the Council has been appointed and will be tasked with the preparation of the new Climate Action Plan for the Council which will revert to the committee later this year. He stated WCCC currently has an internal team consisting of a fulltime Energy Officer and Graduate with an administrative person and the new Community Climate Co-Ordinator due to join the team shortly. It is also expected that a Community Climate Action Officer will be recruited later this year.

T. Hogan said failure to have Waterford City nominated as one of the projects for Ireland was disappointing for Waterford as it will slow down the momentum and wanted his comment noted in the minutes. It was a missed opportunity through no fault of anyone. F. Galvin, DoS stated it was not from lack of work as it was an excellent submission, the goal posts had been changed with a late requirement that all capital cities had to be part of the project.

I. McKenna said the value of the work and information gathered would be of use to others and to partners like the Chamber of Commerce. Cllr. Griffin said the team had been congratulated at Plenary Council on the work done on the submission and felt we stand in a good position going forward if a second round is rolled out. He asked R. Moloney, SEO if the newly appointed officers would be introduced to Councillors, and brought on to the SPC Group? What did he see their role as? R. Moloney, SEO advised he envisaged once team roles are filled, it would be a separate section – Climate Action Section would be established and they would report on a regular basis to the SPC, have an integral part in the presentation on Climate Action Plans etc.

Cllr. Kiely endorsed her disappointment considering the phenomenal work but looking at it objectively felt the right decision had been made as the largest cities have the biggest impact. Asked if there was an opportunity for Councillors or this SPC to feed into the submission following a query by a member of the public. F. Galvin, DoS advised the

submission was technical, and didn't allow for commentary, more how we could link into University, Chamber of Commerce, etc. It was a strict template with very little scope to be creative or to share with the group.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald thanked F. Galvin, DoS for his presentation.

4. Discussion on Water Quality

Cllr. Fitzgerald advised the presentation by F. Galvin; DoS on Water Quality would outline the current position and effects etc on supply. F. Galvin, DoS gave a detailed presentation on Water Quality and reminded the members a River Basin District Management Plan was in place for the last 12-13 years, with second cycle completed in 2021, and third cycle public consultation late last year which would now come in to effect over the coming months and be in place up to 2028. Co-ordination of actions would be overseen by the South East Regional Organisation Committee (SEROC) comprised of members from the various stakeholders e.g.: Inland and Coastal Fisheries, EPA, Department of Agriculture, Irish Water, Farming Association, National Parks and Wildlife Services, Teagasc etc. SEROC meet regularly with the aim of addressing areas of concern and working together with the various bodies, public and private, to seek solutions for the various issues. He stated the main single pressure on water quality in Waterford is agriculture which accounts for 41% of pollutants, with related hydro morphology at 11.5%, which causes run off into water courses, streams and affected the fish breeding. He noted that during the last two cycles of the RBMP, water quality had not improved and that while Waterford was better placed than other areas, that there had been no real improvement. He outlined some of main pressures on water quality, the problems associated with dealing with these and the projects that were being developed to deal with these.

In particular he stated there were positive engagements taking place with Teagasc Advisers educating farming community, people working in the farming community, a new programme starting by Glanbia to reward farmer clients through a financial incentive for measures being put in place to reduce effects of pollution and the impacts of dairy farming. He concluded his presentation saying the RBDMP was in place and its is how we all act and work with to make changes over the next while that will make the difference.

Cllr. Fitzgerald thanked F. Galvin for the presentation and asked for it to be circulated to the members. He said we all have witnessed the effects of pollution and in his own area the estuary has been impacted over the last few winters, with some of farmers own wells were being impacted with pollution. F. Galvin, DoS confirmed this from reports he had received.

Cllr. G. Barron thanked F. Galvin for the report and said it was disappointing considering the 7 Villages Sewerage Scheme as it was expected it would improve water on beaches etc. He acknowledged the difficult times for farming but on did not agree with Glanbia's scheme to reward scheme farmers for following the law and asked what our interactions were with farming associations? I. McKenna queried if there had been any prosecutions being taken? Cllr. Kiely echoed Cllr. Barron's comments and stated she previously raised the impact of water quality downstream, in Bonmahon e.g. where they would lose Blue Flag status and people would be swimming with no Lifeguards. She felt the IFA have left their members down and Glanbia's programme is screaming green washing and has huge concerns about it. She said outside of climate and biodiversity issues, you also have life issues which has an effect on the beach lifeguards.

F. Galvin, DoS advised Teagasc and farming groups regularly attend SEROC. While accepting responsibility, it would be unfair to generalise as not all are non-compliant. Teagasc run programmes and arrange visits to farms of good practice. He confirmed for I. McKenna that prosecutions have taken place by DAFM who reduce supports to farmers who offend. WCCC have prosecuted but overall prosecutions need to be increased. Cllr. Fitzgerald agreed with sentiment of prosecutions to increase considering the dependency on groundwater and the effect on the public at large.

Cllr. Hearne stated while disappointed at pollutions coming in the streams, he said Government previously committed to hiring additional inspectors for sites in height of the boom and only a small number recruited. The inspection of farms at 5% shows it will not happen when one relates it to the NCT inspections and television licence inspections – government will not police farms. F. Galvin, DoS said an NCT style inspection was suggested for farms irrespective of frequency, it was knowing the inspection was due. Cllr. Hearne felt on the spot fines at farms that were offside would supplement the hiring of inspectors.

Cllr. Fitzgerald thanked F. Galvin, DoS for the presentation and moved to the next item on the agenda.

5. Draft Litter Byelaws 2022.

N. Kane, SEE presented the new Draft Prevention and Control of Litter Byelaws 2022 as provided for under the Litter Pollution Act. He stated the new measures enhanced what was contained in the Litter Act and aim to reduce the amount

of litter produced. He said one of the requirements was businesses that sell food, confectionary, nicotine etc must have adequate bins and keep them emptied. The measures included:

- Provision of litter receptacles in the vicinity of their property, e.g. pubs, shops, markets, takeaways and keep the land in their area clean within 100m of the premises. A cleaning schedule to be maintained for inspection by the local authority.
- Takeaways – footpaths to be washed where grease residue is present.
- Shopping trolleys – mandate there they must have a trolley loss device.
- Bird feeding – a lot of complaints where birds fed near outdoor dining – ban on certain streets where outdoor dining. No problem feeding the birds, not leaving whole pans of bread, scraping meals on footpath, and creating a vermin issue.
- Advertising material – this does not apply to election campaign, this where people want to give out leaflets, put up posters, a permit will be required and area within 100 m to be cleaned up.
- Aquaculture – nets, straps from oyster pots. A notice board is to be put up in the area displaying when the area has been cleaned up.

He proposed to put these on public consultation and revert to the SPC with details of submissions received.

Cllr. Fitzgerald thanked for presentation and opened it to questions. Cllr. J. Griffin said he supported this endeavour but he feels there will be a kick back from businesses. There are some very good food operators who only need to up their current procedures to incorporate the changes. He complimented Niall Kane and the team on assistance he had given early in respect to fly tipping issue in Ballygunner early in the morning.

Cllr. Kelly supported the Byelaws but feels enforcement will be an issue as not enough staff or resources. He said €1.3m spent on last clean up and having the byelaws with lack of resources they will be flouted. Cllr. Bailey endorsed Cllr. Kelly's comments and queried number of fines issued and said more bins, in particular dog bins required in certain areas in the city which should be addressed prior to implementing of byelaws. There needs to be more signs erected regarding bird feeding in the areas. T. Hogan while agreed with byelaws queried the issuing of leaflets and necessity for permits as it is a contradiction with elections where there is no rule, and therefore felt not happy with its inclusion.

N. Kane said conditions already exist for mobile chippers and cafes in permit locations. In response to Cllrs. Kelly and Bailey, inspections are prioritised with the RMCEI Plan based on resources available but by having the byelaws it makes it easier to tackle. He stated the Act excluded the local elections and therefore he could not include these in the Byelaws.

I. McKenna stated it was brilliant what N. Kane was doing in shifting the responsibility to the business as they are responsible for the rubbish in their area and cannot see why it would not work? Cllr. Fitzgerald concurred. Cllr. J. Hearne raised issue of leaflets going in doors and N. Kane, SEE clarified it only applies to leaflets being issued on the street. Cllr. Geoghegan welcomed the byelaws and concurs with previous comments raised but supports T. Hogan and the points raised regarding leaflets. Cllr. Kelly supported T. Hogan comments also and requested permits requirement be omitted from the byelaws. Cllr. Fitzgerald asked for a timeline on the process and timescale before going to the Council. N. Kane outlined the process and stated it was a draft document and would remove the permit requirement and keep the area within 100m of leaflet distribution was kept clean and leaflets picked up. Cllr. Barron raised the pre covid campaign "bring your own cup" if it was being brought back due the amount of litter being created from disposable cups. I. McKenna asked if political parties could be banned from using corriboard and made use cardboard as done in other countries, and it be placed in the byelaws. N. Kane said it was not within the remit of the local authority and would have to be changed in the national regulations for inclusion first.

Cllr. Kiely delighted with support for Green Party Bill that is going through the Dáil on the Regulation of Display and Electoral Polling Posters and other advertisements 2022 which will deal with election posters and other issues at election time, which will also include designated spaces for candidates. Cllr. Griffin agreed with Cllr. Kiely and we should agree as politicians to lead the way in next election with designated spaces and number of posters especially when twitter, Facebook are there for use. N. Kane advised the Coffee Cup Campaign will be dealt with by Ella Ryan.

6. Leave No Trace Campaign

E. Ryan presented the Leave No Trace Campaign 2022 which is titled "*Love this Place*" began in June 2022 and is a similar campaign to the last two years. She said it calls on the public to change their behaviour when outside using the amenities in the urban or rural settings and is aimed at everyone - business, community group, school or individual and asks those who are using outdoor areas to clean up after themselves, encourages people to take the pledge to take the leave no trace principles and to take responsibility for our impact on the environment while outdoors. The Campaign will run for June, July, and August. focuses on 3 pressure points:

- Increased littering of the countryside.

- Increase in dog fouling, worrying and attacks on livestock.
- Damage that can be caused by fires.

Waterford Council is a member of the Leave No Trace Campaign and has been using this message on our social media and there are a range of themes done by date for this campaign e.g.

- June 8th - World Ocean Day – Series of images used to focus on impact on ocean environment, sources of marine pollution, how to protect our coastal habitats, clean up after you, bag up your waste and take it home. Leave No Trace images are being used to bring the message home to all users of outdoor amenities.
- Dog fouling another pressure point – series of posts on how to be a responsible dog owner.

She stated if anyone would like more information it can be got on the Leave No Trace Campaign website. R. Moloney, SEO endorsed E. Ryan presentation and said this is a national campaign, which had started in the U.S.A. in 1960's and was now a global campaign and WCCC is a member of the network and supports this new campaign. It was initially a campaign based on the wilderness where now it applies to all outdoor areas and has over 47 different messages being delivered over the campaign period and use local photos to make it relevant to the campaign.

Cllr. Fitzgerald asked if it can be modified to suit a local area, can we use our own signs or must we use the national brand signage as he had recently seen a sign which he felt could be replicated as it was very relevant to the campaign theme? E. Ryan advised our own signs can be used and we could use the Leave No Trace logo to endorse the message.

Cllr. Geoghegan welcomed the campaign and in the hierarchy of messages leave no trace is the most important message we give to people. The issue of where bins are placed will happen anyway the message is more important and wished the campaign well. Cllr. Hearne supports campaign and said with help from the Council an area where there used to be bonfires is now being transformed into a community garden. No one would now dump rubbish there now as it would not be tolerated. He said he has previously requested all the agencies meet every three months, share knowledge and work together on this issue. He complemented the campaign and congratulated all involved in achieving the cleanest city again this year and delighted to be the best and cleanest place to live.

E. Ryan advised that there is now a 2Go Cup - €1 for the cup and a refund of €1 when you bring back to the shop. There are 10 cafes signed up to the campaign in the County and along the Greenway and Waterford and will be launched next month. Cllr. Kiely supports the great work being done by E. Ryan and the 2Go Cups are brilliant and it will be great when more cafes and coffee shops join this campaign. E. Ryan worked with Dungarvan Tidy Town and applied for a waste prevention grant and got funding to support 3 business in Dungarvan to participate in 2Go Cup.

Cllr. Fitzgerald thanked E. Ryan for her presentation and said she had the full support of the SPC's.

7. Date for next meeting

R. Moloney, SEO advised a schedule of meetings had been agreed at the beginning of the year. There had been no in person meeting for over 2 years and was asking how the SPC want to proceed. He said Council meetings had resumed, but it would be dependent on the Covid situation at the time and is a decision for the group. It could be decided nearer the date and acknowledged some members may want online, in person or perhaps there may be a hybrid model option.

Cllr. Barron would prefer an in-person meeting but can understand the reluctance of others. T. Hogan would prefer the hybrid option as it was more accessible but acknowledged everything needs to go to normal but feels the hybrid model should be available. I. McKenna said as an Environmental Group we should not be going back to 100% meeting in person but would be lovely to have an in-person meeting if everyone attended. She would be against more than 50% in person meetings as this save's car energy, etc and reiterated this was an Environmental SPC. Cllr. Kiely agreed with I. McKenna on 50% but was unsure if technology available for hybrid meetings. She said she had spoken to people using hybrid meetings and they found it difficult to hear what was being said unless the Chamber can be kitted out with system. She felt 50/50 or 75/25 would be her preferred option considering travelling and expense. Cllr. Fitzgerald agreed with online and agreed with one in person meeting a year. He felt online meetings were going well and with Covid rising again it was unnecessary risk. It has also been agreed at CPG that SPC's would remain online. He said if decision could be left to a month before meeting with the Executive to decide what was the best option. F. Galvin, DoS noted that most internal staff meetings were still online with consequential environmental, economic, and human resource benefits. However, it may be beneficial to meet in person for a meeting and maybe look at once or twice a year.

Cllr. Fitzgerald said the carbon footprint element must be considered as well, take all circumstances into account. The date of next meeting is September 13th, 2022

8. Correspondence

No correspondence received.

9. Any Other Business

- Cllr. J. Bailey on behalf of Cllr. J. Griffin read a shortened message from Cllr. Griffin requesting assistance for the Saleens Marine Action Group. They had arranged litter picks, clean-up of the area etc and were seeking to create a clean carpark with planting and shrubbery. There were areas burnt from bonfires and is now looking for assistance Council starting off with removal/lowering of mounds to allow for planting and shrubbery.
- Cllr. Bailey enquired about an open space at a local Pre-School belonging to the Council at the back. She had emailed R. Moloney, SEO and Cllr. Griffin had emailed photos of area. She is asking if there was any funding available to get this land redeveloped.
- Cllr. Kiely asked where we stand with a fulltime Biodiversity Officer as funding is available for local authorities. She queried hedge cutting as had a rep from Fenor area as hedgerows were cut back including willow on a straight road to Fenor which were not a danger to traffic.
- Cllr. Fitzgerald asked about the Beach Byelaws and are we responsible for putting them up? The Sign is down at Creaden/Fortnaught Beach and could it be put back up as it gives an excuse to people to do what they like.

F. Galvin, DoS said he would refer the issue of the Beach Byelaws to the GSS with Cllr. Fitzgerald confirming, he would speak to the GSS directly. He advised Cllr. Kiely, he had received a similar query and said it was done in advance of a Triathlon event in Tramore as it is a cycling/running route. F. Galvin, DoS noted that Ms. Bernadette Guest filled the Biodiversity role.

R. Moloney, SEO confirmed he would contact Cllr. Griffin regarding what assistance was needed for the Saleens Marine Group and said the Roads Section may also be able to assist. In respect of the query on the Preschool, he will speak to Property Management to establish the leasing arrangements in place and revert to Cllr. Bailey then.

Cllr. Fitzgerald concluded the meeting by thanking the Councillors, Community and Executive for attending and concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Chair,
Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Action SPC

Date: _____