

**Minutes of Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Action SPC Meeting**  
**held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 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, Cllr. Damien Geoghegan, Mr. Tom Hogan, Ms. Ithel McKenna, Ms. Laura Forbes O'Brien.

**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, Mr. Jonah Faulkner, South East Energy Agency.

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

**1. Minutes of Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022 were proposed by Cllr. Barron and seconded by Ithel McKenna.

**2. Matters Arising**

L. Forbes O'Brien raised concerns about comments recorded in the minutes of meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022 under the Report on Bathing Water Quality at Dunmore East attributed to an SPC member where it was stated in a contribution that there is a serious issue with spreading nitrates on farmland and that it should be cut back. L. Forbes O'Brien also stated that farming is highly regulated and that farmers are proactive when it comes to water quality and identifying risks and avoiding contamination. Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked L. Forbes O'Brien if she wanted the paragraph in the minutes rewritten? L. Forbes O'Brien stated she wanted more context added that farmers are heavily regulated.

Cllr. F. Fitzgerald stated that Woodstown beaches are affected by nitrates. It was proposed by Cllr. G. Barron and seconded by L. Forbes O'Brien to note that the agricultural sector is already heavily regulated.

**3. Draft Prevention and Control of Litter Byelaws 2022 – Report on Public Consultation**

The Draft Prevention and Control of Litter Byelaws 2022 – Report on Public Consultation was received by members on the morning of 11<sup>th</sup> October prior to the October SPC meeting and it was agreed to have a discussion on the report at the November SPC meeting.

N. Kane, SEE gave a presentation on the results of public consultation and detailed the issues raised by people that made submissions. N. Kane, SEE stated that the Litter Pollution Act allows certain actions that the local authority can undertake e.g. making a requirement to provide bins, clean-ups etc. Smoking in front of a premises cannot be banned under the Litter Pollution Act.

Cllr. J. Kelly raised the issue of abandoned shopping trollies and asked are we asking the producers to put a number on trollies. N. Kane, SEE said initially the proposal was that trolley lock devices would be used by supermarkets but were expensive and did not work effectively. A practical measure was to put a name and number people could ring to report the abandoned trolley. This is contained in revised proposal.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald raised the issue of sodium hypochlorite relating to the estuary and shellfish. He asked where can we get figures relating to industrial plants using that chemical? F. Galvin, Director of Services said the main issue is the power station at Great Island. There are reports contained on the EPA website and it is a matter for the EPA. WCCC have no direct input. N. Kane, SEE stated that reports for all licenced sites are listed on the EPA website.

Cllr. D. Geoghegan welcomed the fact that businesses are held responsible for litter outside their businesses. Litter is a major problem in the vicinity of schools despite competitions and education programmes taking place. Cllr. D. Geoghegan continued that we need to engage more with schools and the point made about holding schools responsible is a valid one.

Cllr. J. Griffin raised the issue of noise pollution from a premises in Dunmore East. N. Kane, SEE said noise is beyond the scope of the litter bye-laws.

Cllr. J. Kelly made reference to bye-laws and the enforcement element. He stated the bye-laws at the minute are not enforced or perhaps we do not have enough staff to enforce them. He said resources is always an issue and enforcement may fall short as a result.

I. McKenna said businesses making money from school kids buying sweets should be held responsible for littering and schools should not have another burden to bear.

F. Galvin, Director of Services said any changes can be incorporated into draft bye-laws before they go to Plenary Council.

E. Ryan, Environmental Awareness Officer said that schools cannot be held responsible for actions taking place outside schools.

N. Kane, SEE said putting the responsibility on shops will have the greatest impacts. We have bins outside some schools but we cannot put a regulation on shops beyond 100m. 100m is the limit in legislation.

#### **4. WCCC Climate Action Plan Update**

R. Moloney, SEO spoke in relation to the preparation of the Local Authority Climate Action Plan. We are still awaiting ministerial direction and the expected timeframe for commencement of the new Climate Action Plan is March 2023. At the moment we are at the advanced planning stage. We received funding for a Climate Action Co-Ordinator and Grainne Kennedy was appointed to the role in July. Cllr. P. Fitzgerald said there is a timeline of 2024 for the new plan to go before Council with a date of March 2024 for adoption of the plan.

#### **5. Waterford Grid Study – Presentation by Jonah Faulkner**

Jonah Faulkner from South East Energy Agency gave a presentation in relation to the Waterford Grid Study. A series of events are being hosted to publicise the study.

Cllr. J. Kelly asked what the implications are of having grid space or not having grid space. J. Faulkner stated that the grid is limited in the new capacity it can take. It does need to be upgraded to increase capacity.

G. Kennedy, Climate Action Co-Ordinator said if a community is in an area that is suitable SEAI have supports available. There is €180k in supports for communities.

T. Hogan said this is valuable information and a 4.8mw turbine could power 2,000 homes. J. Faulkner went on to explain the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS).

Cllr. J. Fitzgerald thanked Jonah Faulkner for his presentation.

#### **6. Solid Fuel Regulations**

N. Kane, SEE made a presentation on the new regulations on solid fuels which came into force on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022. Guidance on the new regulations is available from [gov.ie/cleanair](http://gov.ie/cleanair)

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald said the elderly depend on solid fuels for heating their homes. N. Kane, SEE said smokey coal is more inefficient and smokeless coal is cheaper.

Cllr. C. Kiely welcomed these regulations and stated that they are not getting rid of solid fuels but regulating them instead. There are issues regarding turf and turbary rights. It is important that there are no deaths from air pollution. The regulations are better for people with asthma. Cllr. C. Kiely asked if the guidelines/leaflet are going out to households? N. Kane, SEE said he does not think there is a plan to circulate the new regulations to all householders. As long as the fuels that are for sale are compliant householders will be compliant with the new regulations.

Cllr. J. Hearne asked who will enforce the new regulations? N. Kane, SEE said they will be enforced by local authority environmental enforcement staff and multi-agency checkpoints will be held in co-operation with the Gardaí.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked if there will be additional personnel to enforce these regulations. N. Kane, SEE replied that the same personnel that are currently in place that enforce litter and waste will enforce the regulations.

#### **7. Presentation on Smart Bottle Bank Project**

N. Kane, SEE made a presentation on the Smart Bottle Bank Project. Funding of €45,000 was approved under the Public Service Innovation Fund to fit the monitoring devices to the bottle banks. It allows the public to plan their journey in advance to the bottle banks. It is being launched on 5<sup>th</sup> December. It is a map based system which is colour coded

showing if the bottle banks have room or are near or at capacity. The rollout of the scheme is being supported by a social media campaign and a competition.

The sensors are in place at 71 sites. 142 sensors have been purchased. Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked if the glass collection company can put on additional collections at bottle banks? N. Kane, SEE said the glass collection company will work overtime during Christmas to undertake additional collections. The problem arises when everybody tries to go to the bottle banks at the same time.

Cllr. G. Barron said it is welcome to see improvements in something working well. When bottle banks are full some people bring cardboard boxes filled with bottles and leave them beside the bottle banks. He asked if there are any plans to collect aluminium cans? N. Kane, SEE said cans are collected at some sites. The deposit return scheme will be launched in 2024.

Cllr. C. Kiely asked if we are the only local authority undertaking such an initiative? N. Kane, SEE confirmed we are the first local authority undertaking this initiative and it is a demo project for other local authorities. The smart bottle bank project is not just for Christmas. The batteries in the sensors should last 5 years.

Cllr. J. Griffin apologised for having to leave the meeting early.

#### **8. Notice of Motion from Thomas Hogan – Progressive Tendering Arrangement for Waste Disposal**

*The Environment, Climate Action and Biodiversity SPC proposes, that Waterford City and County Council should seek to adopt a progressive tendering arrangement in respect of waste collection services. Such a system would ensure that the successful provider would need to meet quality service standards, including decent terms and conditions for workers, provision of community bins and allow for a subsidised service for people who cannot afford to pay the commercial rate.*

T. Hogan stated his motion was self-explanatory. The practice of 4 heavy refuse trucks going through an estate is out of kilter with what happens of mainland Europe. If the Council were to operate a waste collection service decent terms and conditions for workers and quality standards would be met.

T. Hogan is suggesting the SPC makes a recommendation to Plenary Council to ask the Minister if it is a problem to bring in legislation to introduce a tender process where one supplier would be responsible for collecting waste in a local authority area. It would result in quality standards being improved and decent terms and conditions being provided to workers in addition to improved air quality and reduced emissions. He added that WCCC should ask the Minister to introduce relevant legislation.

Cllr. C. Kiely agreed we should have a standardised waste collection service and not have 5 trucks on 5 estates on 5 days. She said this leads to additional congestion, impacts on everybody and people's ability to walk and cycle in safety. She asked if a motion from this SPC is the most effective way of progressing the matter?

T. Hogan said the sentiment of the motion should be sent forward to Plenary Council to discuss the matter and at least there would be a discussion and a debate on it. The motion carries a certain weight coming from a City and County Council.

Cllr. J. Hearne said that Councils should go back to undertaking traditional services. Cllr. G. Barron agrees with the sentiment of the motion but the idea of local authorities going back to collecting waste is not realistic.

T. Hogan said the motion is not asking for a return to local authorities collecting waste. The motion is seeking to have one waste company collecting waste. In time the Council may want to tender for it. The idea is to regulate the current situation with multiple waste collection companies collecting waste.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald said some people cannot afford to pay bin charges. Community bins would be welcome.

F. Galvin, Director of Services said an elected member of the SPC would need to propose a motion. It would have to be brought forward in the name of one or more Councillors.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked if T. Hogan would be in agreement with a group of Councillors bringing forward the motion?

Cllr. C. Kiely asked if the motion was the correct mechanism to be discussing poor terms and conditions. She said it should be focusing on environmental issues. She does not think we need to bring poor terms and conditions for workers into the wording of the motion as it could potentially jeopardise bringing it to the next stage.

T. Hogan said the motion could be reworded and any reference to poor terms and conditions could be taken out.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald said some members of the SPC can work on the wording of the motion. Cllr. C. Kiely is happy to be involved in it. The last sentence should define quality standards to include workers terms and conditions.

**9. Nominations to Working Group to examine the development of a dog park**

Cllr. J. Bailey wanted to establish a working group to examine the development of a dog park. R. Moloney, SEO will send an email to SPC members to see who is interested in being part of the working group.

**10. Schedule of Meetings 2023**

The February meeting of the SPC will take place on the second Tuesday in February. R. Moloney, SEO will forward a schedule of dates to members for SPC meetings in 2023. The dates will be the second Tuesday in February, second Tuesday in May, second Tuesday in September and last Tuesday in November.

I. McKenna is looking to receive the dates for next year's meetings as soon as possible and wants today's presentations to be sent out to SPC members.

**11. Correspondence**

No correspondence was received.

**12. Any Other Business**

- T. Hogan said the strategic rail review is due to be published before the end of the year. The Rosslare-Waterford line could be included. The Foynes-Limerick line is currently being renewed to be reopened for freight. It is crucial that as much pressure as possible is brought to bear to have the Rosslare-Waterford line included in the final report of the strategic rail review with a view to having the line upgraded. The expansion of Rosslare Port has recently gone to tender for €200m.

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: \_\_\_\_\_