

County Wicklow Public Participation Network

Name of Committee: Climate and Biodiversity Action Strategic Planning Committee/CABA SPC

Name of PPN Representatives: Annette Vaucanson-Kelly, Environment/Conservation Pillar East Wicklow and Sharon Jackson, Environment/Conservation Pillar West Wicklow.

Date of Meeting Attended via Microsoft Teams: July 16th, 2020

PRESENT:

Elected Members: Cllr. Rory O'Connor, (Chair), Cllr. Dermot O'Brien, Cllr. Lourda Scott, Cllr. Peir Leonard and Cllr. Jodie Neary

Representing External Sectors: Rhona Lennox, Wicklow branch of Comhairle na nÓg; Tom Shortt, the IFA; Gary McKenzie, Glen fuels

Officials: Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services at the Dept. of Planning, Development and Environment, Theresa O'Brien, SEO/Senior Executive Officer, Mary Cahill, Senior Executive Engineer/Climate Action Officer, Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer, Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer, Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer

Annette Vaucanson being unable to attend, Judy Osborne of the Wicklow Planning Alliance was nominated to attend the PPN presentation on the results of the online survey into Wicklow's upcoming Tree Management Strategy.

1. The Meeting received a Presentation from the PPN Reps as follows:

In June, Wicklow PPN submitted to WCC a full report and 3 appendices compiling all responses to their online survey on what Wicklow people wished included in Wicklow County Council's upcoming Tree Management Strategy. The members of CABA SPC each received a link to this report and to all the 255 responses to it. The PPN thanks everyone who replied for their detailed and informative responses.

The slide presentation summarised the observations made by the people of Wicklow as follows:

92-96% of all respondents would wish the felling of trees to be a last resort, for bans on hedge-cutting and tree pruning in nesting season to be enforced, for more native species trees to be planted and for information campaigns to increase awareness around the ecological value of mature trees.

The public fervently wished improved planning procedures to be fast tracked, to be fully consulted before any trees were removed and to be able to report and stop surprise tree clearances. Sanctions for non-compliance should include heavy fines and/or full restoration of any trees lost by trees of a similar value.

Since Wicklow does not have a Parks and Landscape Division, respondents called for trained arborists to be appointed and/or consulted, at least one to be employed within the Planning Department and for the best practices in tree management already up and running in neighbouring local authorities to be followed in Wicklow.

Community groups can be funded to plant, maintain and protect local trees, hedges and green areas on Council land. Requests for allotments, fruit trees, increased grants, a ban on harsh chemical pesticides & greater biodiversity were noted.

R O'Connor, Chair, welcomed the survey, stating that he was very glad to have the views of the public brought before the meeting. Cllr L.S replied, stating that a keen interest in the preservation of trees and green areas brought many callers to her office, that the survey's calls for trees to be mapped would be a helpful first step in knowing what tree cover is there to be worked with, that volunteer tree wardens would be a welcome programme to follow, that professional expertise would be needed and that the appreciation for trees in Wicklow was the best foundation on which to build a comprehensive strategy. DB, Heritage Officer, reminded us that Wicklow's Tree Management Strategy would be applicable to trees on lands owned by Wicklow Council and that tree preservation orders/TPO's are revisited every year. Cllr PL suggested that the practice of requiring a Tree Removal Record to be signed would be a useful policy and that drones could be used to map Wicklow's trees and green area land use, since students from UCD had already used drones to successfully produce aerial maps of Arklow. Judy Osborne asked if the Tree Management Strategy was part of the County Development Plan and welcomed the involvement of community & voluntary groups, hoping that the Council would name an official, engineer or other dedicated person for the public to consult with & contact in an emergency or for advice. R O'C, Chair asked that the Tree Management Strategy remain on the agenda and that updates on the progress of the Strategy be brought to every meeting. MC, Climate Action Officer, said she will keep everyone updated. Cllr D. McCabe welcomed the potential for progress in the volunteers' willingness to take a custodian role in the management of local trees.

Drafting the Tree Management Strategy has already been offered out to tender, so far without success. There may be a role for post-graduate student(s) to work on it.

2. Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer announced that, as of August, 2020 this year, application forms will be available for Resident Associations, Tidy Towns & Estates, Community & Voluntary Groups to apply for An Increased Grant Subsidy to fund planting trees or mixed native hedgerow. The grant will cover up to a maximum of €500 and 75% of total expenses. The Wicklow Department of Planning, Development and Environment will email the application forms to the groups who have already expressed an interest. October is the best time of year to plant trees.

3. The Use of Glyphates, harsh herbicides :

On June 11th, the 5 Municipal Districts of WCC met. They hope to get a clear 'one-page' policy together to roll out across all 5 M.Ds on the use of glyphates after a pilot study has been conducted to find viable alternatives. Among the alternatives being tested are foamstream, manual weeding, a vinegar-type spray, mulching around tree trunks, etc...Beekeepers must be told before any pesticides are applied, so they can move their hives to safety, Council workers will have to wear full white protective gear even when applying these alternative solutions. The new Programme for Government requires local authorities to reduce their use of pesticides/herbicides. When WCC has its alternative weed-control strategies selected, Resident Associations and Tidy Towns will be brought into the discussions. Cllr. PL asked that the County Development Plan consider the design of footpaths so WCC builds footpaths unlikely to need treatment for weeds, and that the final choice of weed-management products be brought forward by this SPC as a motion for the whole WCC to vote on before the end of this year.

4. The meeting received an update on the Local Authority Climate Action Charter as follows:

Work continues to update all the Climate Actions from the Climate Charter and transfer them into an Implementation Plan. CARO/Climate Action Regional Office, Wicklow branch: CARO Mid-East is involved with this and the Implementation Plan will follow a standard format and be rolled out across all local authorities to measure how each is performing.

The existing County Development Plan was drafted in 2014 and is to be replaced by the new County Development Plan, which has been audited and updated so that Climate Change is at the forefront and is incorporated throughout. Each chapter of the Co Development Plan promotes Climate Action: Settlement Plans promote compact growth to facilitate public transport, walking and cycling; Residential areas are to incorporate biodiversity; Provisions against flooding risk are to be minimal impact and so on.

There were 155 submissions from the public to the Climate Change section of the Co. Development Plan and the Chief Executive's Report will consider each of these.

The Draft Co Development Plan will be ready by the end of the summer and will spend 10 weeks on public display, probably from February to April 2021. The Chief Executive will assemble a second Report incorporating any changes subsequent to the public's submissions and any second draft will again be on public display by about May 2021. The aim is to encourage the people of Wicklow to take ownership of the Plan. Wicklow's Councillors attend workshops on the Plan to encourage them to get involved and know their role. It is expected that the final County Development Plan will be ready by the end of 2021.

Cllr P.L asked if the County Development Plan had named as an objective to maximise biodiversity on lands owned by the Council? Recommending land use, such as maximising biodiversity on green sites owned by the Council, is not yet under the remit of the Co Development Plan but could be brought to the Council as a policy recommended by CABA SPC and advocated by the Councillor members of CABA SPC. The management of council lands comes under the remit of the Directorate of Corporate Estate and changing the management of Council-owned green sites to maximise biodiversity could be brought to that Directorate.

The Co Development Plan provides a Land use Framework, it is there for the public and the Councillors to develop it.

5. The meeting received an update on Electric- vehicle chargers as follows:

Roll out in Greystones will be to the Marina, for private use and for public use near the park on the Northside and at the Shoreline, though the contract to install the chargers is not yet allocated and the legislation on chargers has recently changed. Plugging into lampposts on the Main St. is unlikely. Fast chargers are significantly more expensive & difficult to install than standard chargers and a decision on which to use has not yet been taken. A Working Group on EV chargers is to report back in September.

6. The Coastal Erosion Plan is almost complete, since the first nine of the ten chapters are ready. The OPW will review it and by September/ October it will be out for public consultation.

7. Ongoing Biodiversity Actions:

The Pollinator Plan has enjoyed good take up. The Pollinator Plan requires a report to be sent by the Council to the Biodiversity Data Centre at the end of each year. This year, the advice to mow less, to mulch or to mow and lift the grass clippings was impeded because some municipal districts have not

bought in suitable equipment yet. The intention is to increase targets for next year. All actions in favour of pollinators can be recorded on [www. pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie). This is where schools and Tidy Towns and Resident Associations record their actions.

Tidy Towns and Estates Awards now award points for well-managed biodiversity.

The Biodiversity Programme is co-funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and WCC Summer plans at the East Coast Nature Reserve and the Brittas Bay Biodiversity Project were disrupted by Covid-19. A Botanical Survey was completed.

Other Eco-surveys may go ahead during Heritage Week at the end of August.

The Workdays when volunteers do an invasive species clean up expect to go ahead in Sept/Oct.

The Swift Project has put up multiple boxes in County Buildings, one at Wicklow library, several in Arklow, one at St Patrick's Church, one in Dunlavin, one in Grangecon, etc

The National Data Centre is collaborating to produce a tutorial video on how to plant and maintain a wildflower meadow. (See Wicklow Co. Co. website: Gardening for Biodiversity)

8. Environmental Education & Awareness:

The new Fashion & Textiles Wearable Clothing project, run in conjunction with the Rediscovery Centre relaunched in May. It encourages Secondary-school students to repair and upcycle clothing. WCC worked with the PPN to map the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. They want the database to be searchable by Climate Action.

The Rediscovery Centre in Ballymun continues to recycle high quality paint. It is available for purchase in their Eco Store and is also available for 'click and collect' on their website. It costs just €1 per litre.

The LAPN/Local Authority Prevention Network is collaborating with #StopFoodWaste.ie to run an online version of the popular #stopfoodwaste challenge via the #stopfoodwaste Facebook page over four weeks starting July 19th. The well-known TV chef, Catherine Fulvio, hosts a video that airs at 8.30 pm each of 4 Sunday evenings and follows up with a live Q&A session at 2 pm the following Wednesday when participants can ask questions about recipes and ways to minimise food waste at home. See www.stopfoodwaste.ie for further resources.

9. Update on Energy Efficiencies achieved by WCC:

If the National Programme for replacing street lighting with energy-efficient LED lighting goes ahead as expected, Wicklow will achieve very significant energy efficiencies in time for 2030. The objective is to reduce energy usage by 50 % before 2030 as measured against the 2009 baseline. So far, to May 2020, the reduction in energy usage is 16.4 %.

The next meeting of CABA SPC will take place in September, at a date to be decided.....

.....the End.....