

# 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: December 9th, 2020**

## **PRESENT:**

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

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

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

The Minutes were agreed. The Climate Action and Low Carbon (Amendment) Bill has not yet been debated in the Houses of the Oireachtas. On 18 Dec 2020, the Joint Committee on Climate Action/JOCCA launched their report on Pre-Legislative Scrutiny on the draft of the Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2020 and this report is now free to download on [www.oireachtas.ie/en/press-centre/](http://www.oireachtas.ie/en/press-centre/)

**The meeting received Climate Action updates from Climate Action Officer, Mary Cahill as follows:**

**On the Implementation of the Climate Action Strategy:** The Draft strategy is to include a section on the management of severe weather events and will be ready for review by the County and City Management Association/CCMA Environment Section and the Climate Action Regional Offices/CARO in February 2021.

**On E-V chargers:** Meetings with the CCMA are ongoing. So far it has been decided that E-V chargers will go to the Shoreline in Greystones and to the county offices and credit union in Blessington. There are questions around which business model and which model of charger to go with, whether the 2021 model would be preferable, how much to charge the consumer, especially as installing E-V chargers on public lands is not economically viable. A workbook is being produced detailing these issues. It was agreed that areas (such as in Bray) could be made 'charger-ready' by installing the duct, pillar and socket required for the charger and that this installation was inexpensive relative to the cost of the charger itself.

**Wicklow County Council is currently rolling out a pilot scheme for a very small number of E-V chargers, but the report of the national working group tasked with drawing up guidance for local authorities is to decide in the coming months whether local authorities, private companies or a third sector will be contracted to supply the extensive infrastructure required.**

### **The Tree Management Strategy for Wicklow County Council on public lands:**

Ms Sophia Meeres heads the team from UCD who are contracted to draft this. She has met with the PPN, with all five municipal districts and with the Climate Team. The draft Strategy document will be available in the New Year when it will be brought before the CABA SPC and will be published on the WCC website ( [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie) ) and through the PPN. **The public will be invited to make submissions to the draft strategy online.** It was deemed unnecessary for the PPN Reps to attend the Steering group meetings.

It is intended that the Tree Management Strategy will outline the procedures applied by WCC in dealing with the cutting of roadside hedgerows, the good practice that is there to be applied across all the municipal districts and the processes for dealing with landowners. Records show that Wicklow Co. Council, relative to some other local authorities, rarely sanctions the cutting/felling/removal of trees. It was noted that the licence required by a landowner who wishes to fell trees on his/her own land is not issued by the County Council and that current legislation affords very little protection to any tree.

**Grants available:** Wicklow County Council are looking to get a database assembled to show which grants are available and from where. LEADER rolls out sizeable grants of money every year and is allocating more and more money to projects that enhance or protect biodiversity. The WCC database is considering a tracking tool to follow the story of each application for a LEADER grant: who sought it, what it was for, how much was awarded. The Sustainable Energy Association of Ireland/SEAI has a fund of €715,000 available and gives 30% grant funding to the projects it undertakes. Climate Action Officer, Mary Cahill, has further details.

**The Avoca River: Attempts to secure the funding needed for UCD and TCD to further research and consider corrective action to clean up the pollution and poor water quality in the Avoca River:** Minister for third level, Simon Harris's Office again refused the €1.2 million in funding required for this research project. The Climate Team now hopes to assemble some funding from a number of different sources: viz: from WCC's own resources in the new year, some from the €35,000 Arklow is allocated to use for Biodiversity, some from the Blue Area water grant and also to apply for funding from the EU to at least complete the research piece. Life funding could be sought for the implementation stage.

**Replacing glyphosate weedkiller with Foamstream:** A new Foamstream machine has been delivered to the Bray depot and the operatives of it will receive training. Meetings to discuss Foamstream were held in all five municipal districts and were very well attended.

**The Woodland Creation Scheme:** The Framework is in place. A Teagasc advisor is seeking sites suitable to be planted as woodland on lands that are in public ownership. **WCC can only make an application for lands that are registered to WCC.** Sites deemed suitable are referred to a Forestry consultant and an ecologist who make the application for permission to plant. So far, 5 sites have been identified: on Wicklow Head, Bray Head, at Sans Souci in Bray and as proposed by the committee of Greystones Tidy Towns. Some parcels of land bought for motorway schemes by compulsory purchase orders/CPOs in private ownership might be suitable, since those parcels owned by Wicklow County council have already been deemed very suitable for woodland planting. Irish Rail in Arklow are aware of the Scheme, have met with Cllr Peir Leonard and others in Arklow and are to discuss with WCC & the Heritage Officer, Deirdre Burns, releasing parcels of land they own to the Scheme.

**The Woodland Creation Scheme will plant lands in public ownership. Parcels of land need to be no bigger than 0.1 hectare** and several such small plots can be packaged together in a single application.

The Climate Team at **Wicklow County Council**, led by Climate Action Officer, Mary Cahill, **are accepting emails to [climateaction@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:climateaction@wicklowcoco.ie)** should suitable parcels of land be available

### **The Meeting received a Presentation on the Offshore Wind Farms proposed for Co Wicklow from Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer:**

The situation around offshore wind farms off the coast of Wicklow and Dublin is in constant evolution, decisions are being made and changed, two companies have come on board in the last 8 weeks. The Climate Action Plan of 2019 set the target for Ireland to produce 70% of its electricity from renewable energies by 2030. There are currently (Dec. 2020) 7 offshore wind projects in line to receive valid grid connections; 5 of these are in the Irish Sea and 4 off the coast of Arklow. 4 of the projects are in the development stage, 2 at the Dublin Array and Codling 1 and 2 Wind Park. SSE Renewables are progressing the Arklow Bank Wind Farm. Another Wind Farm is being considered for North Wexford and one at Kilmichael Point, Southeast Wexford, is in the very early stages. The Kish Banks development has received full consent, Codling Bank Phase 1 and Arklow Bank have passed most stages of consent. They are now looking at how much it will cost them at a RESS/ Renewable Energy Support Scheme Auction to transfer their electricity onto land and join the electricity grid. The cost of joining the grid will be set by the Energy Regulator and not by Wicklow County Council. **For further information, contact Marc Devereux or Christine Flood @ [wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:wicklowcoco.ie). Or see the Energy Regulator's website.**

The Dublin Array turbines will measure 240 metres in height, the Codling Bank off Greystones will number either 76 newer, more powerful turbines or the 220 older model turbines for which consent has already been granted. At Arklow the Operations and Maintenance Base is promised to employ 200+ in the construction phase and 80 permanent jobs will continue on a 24/7 basis over 20/30 years, of which 15/20 graduate positions. In December 2020, An Bord Pleanála and DHPLG will receive the application for the Arklow Bank to come onshore not in the Harbour but to the North of Arklow, near the old L&T factory and along the public road and through fields. Cllr Peir Leonard visited the site for the proposed Operations and Maintenance Base on 8.12.2020 and found trenches dug to an area adjacent to South Beach, between Arklow Roadstone and Arklow Harbour in the Sinker Lift area. Cllr Peir Leonard will follow up on why brown space areas with derelict buildings would not be preferred for re-development over green space areas.

Environmental Impact Assessments found Wicklow harbours were too full/too small/too far away to accommodate electricity coming onshore. The Irish Wind Energy Association's May 2020 Report found that all Irish ports needed investment and Enterprise Ireland is starting to upskill Irish companies so they can compete with UK and EU offshore wind companies. The Marine Business Group with Simon Greenwood has the tugs and boats needed to service offshore wind farms.

**There followed a discussion around the *Community Gains* packages** being promised by developers. How these funds will be spent will be decided by the Energy Regulator. Members of the CABA SPC should have proposals for how to spend the funds ready before the date of the RESS Auction is published and perhaps make these submissions public. There might be legislation coming to determine how the community gains funds can be used. In deciding which developments to favour, CABA SPC recommends that the environmental track record of the company and their commitment to carbon neutrality and public consultation should be prioritised, and that the visual impact of the development also counts.



Strategic investment must be directed urgently into one or more Irish ports on the east coast to develop offshore wind farms, including providing operations and maintenance support;

The Government must bring together industry, ports and local communities to develop offshore wind enterprise hubs to attract international investors and link them to Irish suppliers;

Continued support for Enterprise Ireland's work on an offshore wind cluster for Irish companies to enable them to develop the skills and experience they need to compete in the British and European offshore wind markets;

Bring together schools, universities and training bodies to eliminate the skills gap and ensure that Irish workers can compete for the 2,500 construction – and 700 permanent – jobs that will be created just by achieving our 2030 targets.

Without investment not a single port in the Irish Republic will be capable of servicing the requirements to install an offshore wind farm and developers will be forced to look to ports such as Belfast or those on the British coast

W I C K L O W      E N D L E S S   O P P O R T U N I T I E S

**Cllr Rory O'Connor, Chair, said that Offshore Wind Farms would stay on the Agenda for the next meetings of CABA SPC**

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**The meeting received an update on Biodiversity Actions from Heritage Officer, Deirdre Burns, as follows:**

**The Brittas Bay Project:** is going well. Mowers have tackled the bracken that was suffocating native dune vegetation. Six species of butterfly have been identified and this forms the baseline number. Post Covid it will be possible to engage again with the local public.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre/NBDC will repeat their October workshop on **rare plants**

**The Swift Project:** The population of swifts has declined by 40% in 40 years. The Coordinator obtained the permission of owners and Tidy Towns helped distribute nesting boxes and install callers. Heat maps traced nearly 100 nests in 26 towns and villages across Wicklow, including Baltinglass, South Wicklow and Tinahely. The nesting boxes are designed to blend in and more will be available in 2021.

**Online:** 1. at [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie): *Gardening for Biodiversity* videos; 2. Available for February 2021: the *Garden Wildlife of Wicklow* packs and poster; 3. On website: [www.pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie): *Creating Meadows for Biodiversity*, with a tutorial added for 2021 4. *The River Liffey stories*, illustrated on [Wicklow.ie](http://Wicklow.ie), 5. ***The River Avoca, A Discovery of Beauty***, The LAWPRO Office will collaborate on this video.

Funds are being sought to start work on modifying the barriers to fish migration identified on certain stretches of river, as at Ballinglen Bridge and the 3 Trouts Stream. The East Wicklow Rivers Trust/EWRT has promised some funding to assist salmon migration.

In 2021, Wicklow County Council is to carry out a Biodiversity Audit of its properties and lands, including cemeteries and graveyards. This audit will help inform the Community Woodland Scheme. Cllr Rory O'Connor asked for an area in Kllmacanogue currently designated an area of Nature Heritage/NHA and part of the N11 Scheme, to be included in the WCC Biodiversity Audit with a view to making it more accessible as an amenity for the public. Ms Burns agreed.

Advertisements have been placed on East Coast Radio on the theme: **Nature is good for Health**

**Community Groups wishing their town or village to be among the ten towns or villages selected to draw up a local Biodiversity Plan with the help of ecologists paid by the CWP/ Co. Wicklow Partnership will be invited to apply in early 2021.** CWP: Email: info@wicklowpartnership.ie/ Phone: 0402 20955

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**The meeting received an update from Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer, as follows:**

**The Mapping Tool on [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie) invites all community groups in Wicklow to quickly record onto an interactive map of Wicklow all actions in support of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals. A pack explaining the idea will be distributed in January 2021.**

The # **We love Fashion project** was rolled out across ten local authorities and attracted 20+ team entries in Co Wicklow. The award ceremony in January will be virtual and a video showcasing the students' outfits will be streamed on Instagram. This project won a Sustainable Environment Award for excellence in 2020.

**Household Waste:** Brown bins are being rolled out in Blessington and Arklow. Tidy Towns in Blessington supplied home compost caddies for free to Blessington library, where locals could pick up a compost caddy for free. This offer may be renewed in the new year.

The Wicklow County Council website Environment Section has an extensive section on Waste Management and includes lots of useful information on recycling, waste collection and Composting. See [www.wicklow.ie/environment/waste-management](http://www.wicklow.ie/environment/waste-management)

The mobile recycling service run by Wicklow CoCo continues to collect dry household waste from 10 to 12 pm from a set collection point in Blessington (1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month), Dunlavin (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month), and Hollywood (3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month). See online for details.

The # **StopFoodWaste** challenge run by the Environmental Protection agency over the summer and featuring videos of Wicklow chef, Catherine Fulvio will run again across 8 or 9 local authority areas. The new series of recipe videos will each be 90 seconds long and will offer recipes using up left over ingredients typical of the season. Catherine Fulvio's Seven Tips to avoid festive food waste is featured | [#Wicklow](#) [#YourCouncil](#) [#StopFoodWaste](#) [@Cfulvio](#)

The campaign against Food Waste links up with the Programme for Government's commitment to tackling food poverty in Ireland as part of the Social Inclusion Roadmap steering group's priorities for 2021. 1:10 people in Ireland are identified as living in food poverty and groups like *Healthy Food*

*for all* and the Food Poverty Network, Wicklow branch and *G.I.Y./Grow it yourself* work to empower local communities and individuals.

**Sustainable Energy:** Codema held a seminar in November which was well attended  
**The Home Energy Toolkit is still available to borrow for free from 67 libraries across Ireland.**  
**All Wicklow libraries** have at least one such kit, it may be necessary to pre-book a kit. The 6 tools allow householders to record their energy usage with a view to reducing it.

**Wicklow's Sustainable Energy Communities/SEC** are progressing their Energy Master Plans, Glenmalure's is done, Laragh's almost finished, Wicklow Town and Blessington just started and Enniskerry and Kilcoole due to start early next year.

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The SEAI.ie website is showing slides and sessions recorded at their virtual National Conference over four Thursdays in November.

**The Transition Year Programme** for 4<sup>th</sup> year secondary students intends to propose a suite of activities and a choice as to which aspect of climate action and biodiversity the students wish to pursue. The programme will be based around Irish and local data & will encourage quality and some outdoor study. This programme & the Heritage Office will propose having primary and/or secondary students map the names of their local watercourses, with help from the older generation, before this knowledge dies out. Some history/geography classes may have already done this.

**Climate Action Workshop:** The members of CABA SPC will be attending a meeting in January 2021 to decide what content should be included under the headings on the new Climate Action webpage. Wicklow Co. Council's IT Department and K. Boyle have set up the web page.  
**The PPN Representatives would appreciate your help in deciding the content on the Climate and Biodiversity Action webpage and will seek your input in January after this committee meeting on the topic.**

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**The Schedule of CABA SPC Meetings for 2021:**

**The Climate and Biodiversity Action SPC will meet every second Thursday of every second month in 2021**

**The Schedule of Meetings is: Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>, April 8<sup>th</sup>, June 10<sup>th</sup>, August 12<sup>th</sup>, Oct 14<sup>th</sup>, Dec 9<sup>th</sup>**

This allows community groups and linkage groups time before each of the six meetings to ask questions and propose items for the Agenda through any member of the committee.

**The Chair, Cllr. Rory O'Connor, has invited any member of the public in Wicklow to bring any issue they may wish to have included on the Agenda to his attention by emailing him on: [roconnor@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:roconnor@wicklowcoco.ie)**

.....**The next meeting of the CABA SPC will be Thursday, Feb 11th, 2021.....**