

County Wicklow Public Participation Network

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

PPN Representatives present: Sharon Jackson, Environment/Conservation Pillar West Wicklow.

Date of Meeting Attended via Microsoft Teams: April 8th, 2021

PRESENT:

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

Representing External Sectors: absent

Officials Present: Mary Cahill, Climate Action Officer, Pamela O'Reilly, Administration, Theresa O'Brien, SEO/Senior Executive Officer, Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer and Deirdre Burns, Heritage & Biodiversity Officer.

1. The meeting received a presentation about the work of the Local Authorities Water Programme from Community Water Officer for Kildare-Wicklow, Dónal O'Keeffe. Email: dokeeffe@lawaters.ie, Tel: 085 870 0126.

What LAWPRO does, Email: info@lawaters.ie, HQ in Clonmel, 13 Community Officers, 3 regional coordinators, Works with other groups like the Irish River Trusts, Tidy Towns groups, **epa**Catchments, UCC/University College Cork, the CSSI, OPW/Office of Public works and IFI/Inland Fisheries Ireland and CWPPN/Co. Wicklow Public Participation Network to set new priorities every year.

A Community Biosphere Reserve initiative is getting underway at the 3Trouts Stream in Farrenkelly.

On 21st April this year LAWPRO launched the 8-module catchment-based water and biodiversity training to 33 communities in 9 locations across Ireland in association with IRD Duhallow. Modules include: Promoting sustainable water-based activities, Citizen science, Communities delivering bottom-up approaches to water quality conservation and protection.

The IFA/Irish Farmers Association and Teagasc meet landowners on site and face to face to discuss any concerns.

The Rivers Management Plan is to be updated under the Programme for Government 2021-2027 following many meetings with interested parties

The EREP/Environmental Riparian/Riverside Enhancement Programme was undertaken by IFI/Inland Fisheries Ireland and is an applied scientific study driven by the requirements of the EU's Water Framework Directive, particularly that the status of all water bodies should be at least "Good". The emphasis is on the restoration of natural river processes at a time when "only 53% of rivers, 50.5% of lakes and 38% of estuaries are in 'satisfactory' ecological health", epa.ie.

Minister Pippa Hackett has just announced new funding for trees to be planted alongside rivers. The SUAS/Sustainable Uplands Project supplies some funding towards the restoration of habitat. Wicklow supplies drinking water into Dublin and works to the uplands are a potential flood mitigation measure, there may soon be need for a Co Wicklow Policy that will answer these needs while also protecting the biodiversity of species in river, sea, upland and riparian habitats.

Open Call: LAWPRO's Community Water Development Fund 2021 has been increased to €360,000 in 2021, up from €225,000 in 2020. This Fund is open to all community and voluntary groups to assist in the protection and management of water quality, both locally and in the wider catchment. The application form is online and applicant groups are asked to contact their local Community Water Officer before making the application..(dokeeffe@lawaters.ie/085 870 0126).

A Guide for Communities working for water, biodiversity and climate action is available to download, as are updates on online educational resources like the collection of *Stories from the Riverside* or the *Living Lakes, Ireland & UK* video or the *River Derry Bubbles Project* around Hacketstown/Tinahely for Heritage Week each August.

Upcoming water events are listed on the LAWPRO.ie website, like the Sat., 22nd May events to mark International Biodiversity Day.

Annual Reports 2016-2019 are also posted to LAWPRO.ie, as is information on various community meetings nationally in November 2020. Pilot studies in Wicklow were undertaken by students to the Uplands Catchment of the River Liffey and to the River Derreen in 2020.

2. Selecting a pilot Decarbonisation Zone:

Jim Callery, Environmental Officer, commented on the marking scheme being used to select the one application that would go forward to be Co. Wicklow's pilot decarbonisation zone, where decarbonisation measures could be tested for later rollout across the county.

Six zones had already been selected: Arklow, the 4-Villages of Newtown-Kilpedder-Kilcoole-Newcastle, Wicklow Town, Bray, Greystones, Blessington and Laragh-Glenmalure. They were marked for the opportunities they presented to quickly commence testing the rollout of decarbonisation measures under the headings: Energy, Retrofit and Renewables; Transport and Travel; Citizen Engagement, Tidy Towns, Town Team; Environmental Adaptation Works underway or ready to start, Nature-based, Biodiversity; Food, Community Gardening, Local Food Business, Food markets; Circular Economy underway or ready to start, Reuse activity, Second-hand Trade, waste to energy, Retrofit and Renewables.

It was noted that larger urbanisations had the advantage of more residential property to retrofit, a variety of transport links, larger industrial zones to test on, etc. The 4-Villages project was praised for its blend of rural and urban environments and its modelling of how smaller zones could put initiatives in place to link up with each other and enhance quality of life and economic activity.

There is no budget allocated yet to the decarbonisation pilot.

The zone to be designated as Co Wicklow's pilot decarbonisation zone will be announced by the end of April, following consultation with the Council plenary.

3. Resources, Staffing, Funding:

There followed some discussion of Resources and funding being required to get new initiatives up and running and to bring everyone along. A request was lodged to have Funding, Budgeting and Resources be brought as an item for discussion on a future Agenda, before the Climate Action and Low Carbon (Amendment) Bill, currently under debate in the Dáil, is signed into law. The Climate Action Plan that will follow the Bill will require resources and funding. There is already a Climate Action Fund, but any loans from it require heavy matching funding of up to 55%.

4. Discussion of Co Wicklow's Public Lighting Policy, What LEDs to Use and Where:

Wicklow Co Co has started to replace 15,000 public lights with LED lights, so as to reduce its electricity bills by one third. Wicklow County Council's Road Management Office have been working from the British standard for public lighting written into the April 2017 *Policy On Public Lighting* which is now to be re-

assessed and upgraded in light of the Report on *Best Practice Public Lighting* published by Dark Sky Ireland.

The Mayo Dark Skies report to the draft Mayo Co. Dev Plan, submitted on 16.03.2021, is very useful.

CABA SPC will make a submission to the Roads Management Office on this issue. Theresa O'Brien assured Cllr Lourda Scott that this submission would be taken onboard since Climate Action is threaded through all corporate plans within the whole Wicklow local authority organisation.

PPN Rep., Sharon Jackson asked for this issue to be kept on the Agenda and asked to send on a 4-page Report on this issue to all present after the meeting, since the Report detailed the research gathered by the researcher, Eoin Llewellyn into Biodiversity collapse and International solutions over the last 2 years and included extensive web links to his materials, sources and presentations in this matter. This was agreed and the Report sent.

Internationally, there is evidence that white/blue LEDs are the direct cause of a sharp decline in the numbers of nocturnal wildlife, hence the darkskies.org organisation which is campaigning for there to be 3 styles of public lighting: full lighting of busy public areas, with the newer 3000 Kelvin LED lights, tilted to shine most light downwards to the path, perhaps with sensors; lighting in sensitive areas, like outside 20 m of rivers, to be fitted with sensors, hooded and/or as low in height as possible; and, above all, for protected areas, wildlife corridors in parks and sanctuaries to switch off public lights altogether at certain hours of the night and to instead direct people to use main thoroughfares at these times.

For more information, such as the lighting of greenways, riverside blueways and parks, please contact www.llewellyn.ie, www.dublinartstudio.com, who can then link you to the latest research in this area.

Note that this research has been presented to several Government Ministers and Councillors and to interested groups such as Tidy Towns, LAWPRO, IFI, WPA/Wicklow Planning Alliance, BirdWatch, the Botanic Gardens, the National Garden City initiative and the Farrenkelly 3Trouts Stream project...

5. The alternatives to the Weedkiller Glyphosate/Round up:

There is an Irish National Action Plan on the use of Pesticides

Wicklow County Council is committed to using glyphosate only very occasionally to kill rampant plant species resistant to all other weedkillers. The new Foamsteam machine has been delivered to Bray depot and will kill weeds using steam. A new manual multi-head wire-brush weed sweeper is to be ordered. It is drawn behind a tractor and sweeps weeds from kerbs and paving. The design of future paving may need to minimise the use of grouted intersections where weeds can take hold

6. The Tree Management Strategy on Wicklow County Council lands:

Presentation of Chapters 9 & 10 summarising the 6 Goals of the Report commissioned from the Landscape Architecture Department of University College Dublin, headed by Prof. Sophia Meeres:

Mary Cahill, Climate Action Officer is funding part of the BlueSkies.ie comprehensive drone mapping of woodland, trees & hedgerows in Co Wicklow from the Climate Action Fund. These maps can be made available to community groups. The more comprehensive packages are costly, but are updated for free. The Tree Management Protocol recommends first Mapping what is there, then establishing a Planned Annual Programme of Works, which would be published online on the Council website. Goal 3 is to inform and involve the public, Goal 4 to Restore Biodiversity: County Wicklow's Ancient Forests of the Future, Goal 5 to Manage Mature Trees, Goal 6 to Create a Future for Wicklow's Urban Woodlands.

These ambitions and the detail of how to implement them were well received. As several remarked in summary: The ambition is there, now the legislation must follow and the Parks/OPW staffing needs will have to be addressed over time.

To fully appreciate the scope of this Report, Chapters 9 & 10 are added as an Appendix.

7. Climate Action Report:

Energy

EV Chargers

EV Chargers will be installed at Shoreline Greystones, Main Street Blessington and the area office in Blessington in the coming weeks.

Solar Panel Carport at Wicklow County Council Buildings

The local energy supply contract has now been signed with Enerpower. The detailed design works for the project are expected to be completed in January, with the procurement process taking expected to take 8-10 weeks. It is envisaged site works will start in April 2021 and last for a duration of 9 weeks.

Energy is to be supplied over a 20 year period at a fixed unit rate

Enerpower are planning on installing additional EV Car Chargers with the system also.

BEC/Better Energy Communities Application

WCC/Wicklow County Council, with the assistance of the 3CEA/3Counties Energy Agency made an application to the SEAI/Sustainable Energy Association of Ireland for BEC2021 funding and this application was approved for energy efficiency projects at 9 locations throughout the County. The Energy Management Team has reconvened and projects will commence in the coming weeks.

SEC/Sustainable Energy Communities

Progress continued on the Sustainable Energy Communities in County Wicklow but with some inevitable delays due to Covid restrictions. Glenmalure is now completed with the report issued to the community. Laragh is nearly complete and currently being reviewed by the community. Both Newtownmountkennedy and Greystones/Delgany are 50% completed but further auditing can only resume once Covid restrictions ease. Wicklow and Blessington have started their Energy Master Plans both holding public awareness online events in January and February to engage participation and select buildings for auditing. Kilcoole and Enniskerry are the newest communities to join the programme with Enniskerry recently submitting an application to Wicklow County Council to take the role of lead partner in an application to SEAI for funding of their Energy Master Plan. An event is planned for the 14th of April to engage public participation in setting up a SEC in Arklow.

8. Wicklow Heritage & Biodiversity Plans

- County Heritage Plan allocations received from The Heritage Council for the implementation of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan actions in 2021 (€30,000). Heritage Forum Meeting held 30th March.
- Application for funding to implement Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan submitted to the National Biodiversity Action Plan fund by 26th March. The focus is on the management of properties owned by

Wicklow County Council. Conservation management actions at Brittas Bay (continue year 3); Kilmacanogue Marsh (prepare mgmt. prescriptions to protect and enhance access) and Biodiversity audit and management prescriptions for WCC historic graveyards (pilot)

- Know Your 5 K – Free online course to assist individuals to research their locality in county Wicklow over 5 sessions to commence in 6th April. The outcome from the training will promote engagement with Our Wicklow Heritage, the online community Heritage website for county Wicklow.
- Our Wicklow Heritage: One additional community heritage website launched as part of the OWH/Our Wicklow Heritage network on the theme of Rathdown Ancient Heritage, under the aegis of Greystones Tidy Towns.
- Biodiversity Awareness programme: ‘*Spring into Nature*’ programme underway Feb – May, includes the production and free distribution of publications (Wicklow Wildlife posters and Gardening for Wildlife booklets and other Wicklow habitat guides) and the hosting of six free nature themed zoom evening talks (supported by the Healthy Ireland programme) From Feb- March.
- The Swift Project is in its 4th year. Swifts are seen here for three months on warm, dry evenings from the first week of May. The local coordinators are oran@irishgardens.ie (for advice, help sourcing, siting and maintaining nestboxes and callers) and dburns@wicklowcoco.ie, (who has some nestboxes ready to go to community and tidy towns groups). Both coordinators will supply the extensive free brochure with all information on nestboxes, etc, which can also be downloaded from: wicklow.ie/living/your-council/climate and biodiversity action. Report sightings please to: www.biodiversity.ie/swifts.
- **Local Biodiversity Action Plans for towns and villages in County Wicklow:** A joint action with CWP/County Wicklow Partnership supported by the LEADER programme. Biodiversity training is anticipated to start in May 2021. **Expressions of interest were submitted by eighty-one/81 community groups around Wicklow. There are ten places available.** Applications are now closed. Ten towns or villages will be supported by experts as they draw up a Biodiversity Plan to improve biodiversity in their local area
- The CWP is about to offer training to the 12 applicants from all over Wicklow who will set up in business to act as Forest Guides. Thirty-two/32 have applied. The training will include 3 days immersion in the forest, 5 workshops and business development training for social enterprises.
- **Community Monument Fund (CMF);** This grant scheme is co-ordinated by the Heritage Officer on behalf of the National Monuments Service DHHLG. The scheme was advertised in early March, applications invited by 12th April, shortlisting to Dept by end of April
- Wicklow Library Service is part of the *National Grow it Forward* campaign organised by Grow it Yourself. **The libraries have a number of free seed kits to share with anyone interested in growing some food at home and sharing on the seeds/produce with neighbours or family and friends.** The kit contains seeds for beetroot, carrots, salad leaves, peas and tomatoes; a guide to help grow them and a postcard and gift tags to help share them. Those who sign up will also receive regular emails with growing support, video clips and ideas for how to ‘grow it forward’ by passing on seeds, seedlings or produce in accordance with social distancing guidelines. The idea is each person who gets a kit will share with 9 others. Trays, pots and some compost will be needed to plant the seeds and transfer the vegetables, and these aren't provided by the libraries. To find out more contact your local Library.
- **Protected Structures Grants:** The Heritage Office co-ordinated application to the BHIS and HSF schemes on behalf of Wicklow County Council Planning Section. €72,000 allocation available for county Wicklow under the BHIS in 2021. Assessments completed and shortlisted projects were forwarded to the Dept by end of Feb. Await outcome.

9. Climate Action Team

Priority Action items:

- A Tree Strategy is being drawn up for the County. UCD Landscape architecture department has been appointed to co-ordinate the Tree Management Strategy for Wicklow County Council - a draft policy document was received in March 2021 and is being reviewed by the WCC Climate Action Team. Chapters 9 & 10 of the Draft Policy, which addresses the policies and goals of the Strategy, is being circulated to the members of the SPC for discussion purposes only at the meeting on 8th April.
- Woodland Creation Project: All departments were asked to identify public lands which could be suitable for community woodlands. CARO have issued guidance on this project which is being funded by the DAFM. The Climate Action Officer is liaising with Teagasc advisor to appraise each identified site. Three proposed parcels of land have been forwarded to Teagasc to carry out a desk top study on their suitability for the scheme.
- A Foamstream machine has been purchased from Furlong Equipment Ltd and will initially be deployed in the Bray Municipal District. – training on the use of the machine has been delayed due to COVID restrictions. Bray MD are acquiring a trailer to transport the machine and the machine will then be put to use. All MDs have been instructed not to remove any pollinators until late April/early May so the foamstream machine will not be deployed until May.
- A policy document is being drawn up on the use of Glyphosate by Wicklow County Council and will be discussed at the next SPC for approval. WCC will contribute to a research project being lead by Kildare Co Co and rolled out on a sub-regional basis.
- Climate Action training for all staff continues through webinars.
- WCC Roads Department are running pilots in collaboration with the TII and CARO South to draw up protocols to measure the carbon footprint of services being delivered by this sector, eg: surface dressing and overlay projects.
- Decarbonisation Zones: Work is ongoing to select a town/zone for the DZ Project. The deadline for selection is end April 2021.
- Upper Avoca Catchment – NBSs Project. A number of meetings have been held with ministers to make a pitch on this project and source funding. While all parties agreed that this is an excellent proposal and would inform policy going forward there is no stream of funding at present for this type of project. Awaiting the next call for applications to Climate Action Fund for this project.

10. Environmental Awareness

- The final for the *Relove Fashion* competition was held on the 22nd of February. A good level of entries was achieved in Wicklow with 23 teams from six secondary schools. Work has commenced on planning for the next school year with plans to launch it in May. We will create a web based portal for entries and open a Facebook account to increase the interaction with schools via technology and make the process easier in in managing a multi- local authority participation.
- We are developing a *Transition for Climate* programme providing resources for Transition year students to plan and develop a project focused on a Climate Action theme. Partners in the project are Kildare, Meath and Louth local authorities and the CARO office. The programme contains modules on Energy, Active Travel, Biodiversity, the Circular Economy, Water, Rivers, Food, Trees, Advocacy, Business and Air Quality. A first draft has been prepared & the Climate Action Steering Group will be consulting with transition year teachers in April.
- A *Sustainable Tourism* webinar was held on the 16th of March. The event was organised in collaboration with Wicklow Tourism. Speakers included Sustainable Tourism Ireland, a Wicklow based company who offer training and certification, a case study from the Killarney Ross and Parks hotels, and an introduction to the Sustainable Energy Communities programme. Over 100 people registered for the event and feedback to Wicklow Tourism was very positive with participants keen for further events particularly on

certification and the circular economy. Wicklow Tourism is developing resources for its website and we are gathering case studies of good practice in the county.

- Following the successful revamp of recycling facilities in County Buildings at the start of the year we have purchased two office paper shredders for use in the Environment and Waste Management sections. Large amounts of paper are bagged and collected for shredding to comply with GDPR. This pilot aims to reduce cost while shredding the documents at source reducing the impact of the process.
- National Tree Week was celebrated by the Tree Council of Ireland as a virtual event. Wicklow County Council as a member of the Tree Council received 800 trees which were advertised on social media, through the PPN and contact lists. 62 groups across the county received trees for planting locally.
- The EPA/Environmental Protection Agency put out a call for projects under the Local Authority Prevention (of waste) Network/ LAPN. An application for funding from the EPA was submitted by Wicklow County Council. The project applied for is to develop composting solutions for the management of the high levels of grass production which must be lifted when green space is being managed for pollinators. This project will help to facilitate Wicklow County Council's commitment to designate spaces for pollinators.
- Wicklow County Council is working with seven other local authorities to develop a series of short videos for use on social media. The campaign will include six animated videos each of which shows the impact fouling has on others and uses a variety of scenarios including children, a wheelchair user, a volunteer cutting grass, a dog Walker at night, dogs themselves bringing the mess home as paw prints and the impact on beach users. We will seek matching gifs which can be shared by Residents Associations more easily on What's app groups and will serve as reminders of the main campaign.

The Meeting having run over time it was adjourned. Discussion of a contribution to the Climate Conversation in support of the upcoming Climate Action Plan was left to another meeting.

The next meeting of the Climate and Biodiversity SP Committee will be on
Thursday, June 10th

Appendix:

Chapters 9 & 10 of Tree Management Report, Co Wicklow

9. Protocol: How to care for Council Trees

1. Tree surveys and inspections

POLICY 1:

Trees will be assessed on a rolling safety and condition survey programme described as best practice in **BS 3998 (2010) the British Standard for Tree Work – Recommendations**.

The survey of trees will be undertaken by trained and qualified inspectors, typically qualified to degree level with competencies as prescribed in BS3998, with proven industry experience. Where condition and assessments are being updated, work can be undertaken by inspectors with a recognized arboricultural qualification to a minimum of level 3 on the National Framework.

The Council will formalise responsibilities in relation to trees and make the information publicly available on the website.

2. Planning tree works

POLICY 2:

The Council will never remove a tree or undertake pruning works without good reason

Work will be specified only after inspection by a suitably qualified arborist and undertaken in accordance with BS 3998 (2010) the British Standard for Tree Work which covers the management of trees and overgrown hedges, taking into consideration the soil, growing environment and the needs of adjacent trees.

Work will be undertaken only if an inspection identifies disease, decay or any other defect that would lead a tree to fail, if a tree is dead or visibly in decline, has lost more than 30% of its foliage, has

branches that are touching a building, or is interfering with road signs, streetlights or sightlines, or if there is evidence that a tree is the cause of structural damage that cannot be addressed by any other means (and other means have failed).

In some cases, removal of a tree may be necessary to allow space for adjacent trees to thrive. If necessary, crown lifting may be carried out to maintain effective clearance over a road and will be carried out such as to maintain a natural balanced shape.

Formative pruning of young trees is permitted where it will encourage a good natural shape and reduce health issues and reasons for major pruning when a tree is mature. **No works such as pruning, crown reduction or removal will be undertaken** because of requests from residents that perceive a tree as too large, or because of loss of sunlight, because of shade, disruption to TV signal, obstruction of views, because insects or other wildlife are present, because of other perceived nuisances such as leaf or blossom fall, falling seeds and berries, honeydew, bird droppings or allergies.

Tree topping causes large wounds, exposing trees to decay pathogens and causing their long-term decline, as well as being unsightly and potentially unsafe. For that reason crown removal in older trees (topping, or height reduction) will not be carried out.

A planned annual programme of maintenance (planting, pruning and removals, hedge trimming) will be presented annually to the relevant Local District Committee, before the start of the season.

The approved annual programme will be made available to the public via the Council website.

Notices of work will be placed in suitably visible positions at the site at least 2-weeks in advance of the commencement of works. Sometimes notices may be dropped into local residents, and/or emailed to residents associations.

Hedges will be managed to maintain them in good health, and in accordance with the Heritage Councils brochure Conserving Hedgerows.

The aesthetic and wildlife value of rural hedges is well documented in the Heritage Councils brochure. The use of traditional best practice methods will be encouraged ie hedges trimmed every three years, during the dormant season, preferably using hand tools and a certified hedge layer holder of a **NPTC AO20 Cert**, registered with The Hedgelaying Association of Ireland. Opportunities exist for training and job creation. Hedge laying is a lost skill and there are few certified hedge layers.

The Council will respect the nesting season in the planning of tree works.

Activities that relate to the physical upkeep of trees and hedges will be carried out during the winter season only ie after 1st September and before the 1st March (at the latest), so as to avoid disturbing nesting birds and other wildlife. Where tree works have potential to affect protected species or their habitat, the Council will have regard to legislative requirements. Essential tree works will be undertaken in a way that minimises adverse impact and ecological advice will be sought where necessary.

Care will be taken to account for the natural cycle of a tree species in the timing of planned works.

Certain trees bleed sap excessively in the early spring (Maple for example).

Common ivy will be retained except where removal is necessary to aid visual tree health assessment or where growth is excessive and adversely affecting tree health. Ivy provides important nesting sites for blackbirds, wrens and other birds, and its nectar is of particular value to insects, particularly butterflies, and bees which often depend on it for survival during winter and early spring.

Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, standing deadwood will be left in-situ to provide habitat for native species and contribute to local distinctiveness.

3. Reactive activities

POLICY 3:

Trees that are reported as dangerous will be inspected by an arborist, qualified as in Policy 1. above, before any necessary work can be undertaken by an arborist qualified to a minimum of level 3 on the National Framework.

Where street trees are confirmed as an immediate hazard to safety, or have fallen, they will be removed by a suitably qualified contractor or Council employee without further notice.

In the case of unplanned emergency works, undertaken to remove hazards, notice will not normally be given.

The Council (or their contractors) will carry out inspections of trees prior to any reactive work to be carried out during the nesting season. If an active nest is observed, advice from experts will be sought and work should be delayed if at all possible.

4. Removal of trees

POLICY 4:

Trees will be removed only as a last resort and after inspection by a qualified surveyor.

The usual criteria for removal for a dead or dying tree is that it is considered dangerous, or risks spreading disease to other trees. In some cases, however, the removal of a tree may be required as part of a renewal plan: to allow a neighbouring tree to flourish, or allow space for new planting.

Trees will not be removed to facilitate the unplanned widening of driveways, because of loss of sunlight, disruption to TV signal, solar panels, obstruction of views, because wildlife is present, because of other perceived nuisances such as leaf or blossom fall, falling seeds and berries, honeydew, bird droppings or allergies.

Very occasionally, a tree may be causing structural damage that cannot be addressed by any other solutions such as:

Alternative solutions that may be considered include:

Ramping /reprofiling of pavements

Removal of kerbs or low walls to leave a gap

Filling in of cracks

Building kerbs out into the roadway

Footpath deviation

Reconstruction of the footpath with loose material

Convert footpaths to grass verges In the case of likely removal of a significant tree, councillors must be informed as in Policy 2 and alternative solutions discussed. If alternatives have been tried and have failed, councillors will be informed and the removal planned for the following season and published on the Council website. Notices of work will be placed in suitably visible positions at the site at least 2-weeks in advance of the commencement of works. Sometimes notices may be dropped into local residents, and/or emailed to residents' associations.

Large tree stumps may be left in place.

Replanting in the same spot is not possible until the roots have rotted and this can take several years.

For various reasons replanting in the identical location is not always ideal. Normally, whenever a tree is removed in accordance with the annual plan, its replacement will have been considered.

5. Planting of trees

POLICY 5:

On construction sites all work must be in accordance with British Standards BS 5837:2012

Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Constructio10. n – Recommendations.

This document provides best practice recommendations relating to tree care, with a view to achieving the best relationship between new construction, existing structures and trees. It provides current practice measures regarding planning for the management, protection and planting of trees in the vicinity of structures, and for the protection of structures near trees. Its recommendations include recommendations for the protection of trees during site work.

Based on **BS 3998 (2010) the British Standard for Tree Work – Recommendations**, the Council will develop a **Technical Manual for the Planting & Maintenance of Trees in Streets** and a **Technical Manual for the Planting & Maintenance of Trees in Parks**

Chapter 10. A tree, woodlands and hedgerow strategy for Co.Wicklow

Goals and Recommendations:

This current Tree Management Strategy aims: to advise on the best possible management of trees, woodlands and hedges under the care of the Council, envisage enhancement of tree, woodland and hedge cover throughout the County to help combat climate change, mitigate against the effects of climate change and protect and enrich biodiversity and to identify strategies to engage and collaborate with the public and partners in deciding what **County Wicklow's future forests** are to become.

Our study has led us to identify six overarching goals for the County Wicklow tree and woodland management policy. From each one we derive a series of recommended actions.

1. County Inventory: We need to know what we've got

The need to establish the extent (and health) of informal tree, woodland and hedge cover throughout the County is urgent. Base-line data is insufficient. An almost complete lack of information about the resource at county level means that it is vulnerable despite aspirations to protect and enhance it. The only forest that is measured in any detail is the commercial forest. Furthermore, the lack of base-line data about County Wicklow's woody habitats may hinder future access to funding under EU Biodiversity programmes.

2. **Protocol: How to care for the council trees**

A simple protocol for the management of the current resource under the care of the Council has been provided. It stipulates a few more procedural checks and balances, clear responsibility, a multi-year maintenance plan for efficiency and dedicated annual budgets to conduct surveys and inspections. In addition to the general maintenance protocol, technical manuals are required and access to relevant British Standards documents. Bray Municipal District, in particular, has a lot of expertise that could and should be shared. The County Council would benefit from the expertise of a dedicated Tree Officer.

3. Inform the Public: People want to know about their trees

The public is divided about trees! Some are concerned about the nuisances they pose, others about the loss of nature. Public awareness about role of the Council is insufficient. Communications need to be improved. There is a need to promote the cultural, ecological and environmental value of trees, as well as the legal context that protects them. A vast amount of literature about trees, woodlands and hedges has been produced in recent years. Wicklow County Council should make all relevant information accessible: best practice procedures, recommendations, policies to do with tree management on public and private land as well as details of funding programmes and community projects.

4. **Restore Biodiversity: Imagine County Wicklow's Ancient Woodlands of the Future, Together**

Native woodlands of significant size are missing from the countryside, where present they are limited to isolated fragments. This situation must be improved if biodiversity is to be restored. The replanting of native woodlands associated with the gradual replacement of exotic forest and restoration of wetland and riparian habitats could transform the County's green infrastructure potential. If Coillte were to lead the way, in partnership with the County Council, achieving 30% protected native habitat by 2030 would be possible.

5. **Manage Mature Tree Stocks: Renewal must be planned**

The long-term renewal of significant mature trees and woodlands must be managed. A protection order is not sufficient, it must be accompanied by a holistic management plan for each site. Woodlands made up of trees of similar age cannot regenerate naturally. Surveys in Bray show that mature remnants of demesne planting are already in decline, a situation that will not improve with time. Loss of these significant trees and woodlands across the County can be avoided, but must be managed carefully.

6. **Beauty, Biodiversity and Quality of Life: Creating County Wicklow's Urban Woodlands, Together**

The concept of County Wicklow's urban woodlands is new; this forest existed without being viewed as such. The concept depends on an understanding of all the urban woodlands, trees and open spaces in a town as a single entity, with the importance on a holistic view and future enhancement of the forest as a whole, rather than individual trees.

The trend towards increased community tree planting in towns and on Council managed lands is positive, but young trees and woodlands must be managed if they are to thrive and reach their full potential. Without management, woodland planting risks failure and disappointment. New plantings should be carried out as part of a larger coordinated plan that properly accounts for aftercare and future management needs.

Comment on the above goals:

A county-wide vision for the expansion of trees and woodlands and their management (and renewal, see points 4 and 6 above) could be planned and implemented in consultation with strategic partners (large and small landowners, Coillte Nature, Woodlands of Ireland etc).

It will require a public awareness programme about **County Wicklow's urban woodlands** that aims to agree a plan for the expansion of urban forest cover with local stakeholders and other partners (NGOs, community groups, householders, schools etc).

A parallel or subsequent public awareness programme about **County Wicklow's informal and riparian woodlands** would establish a concerted vision, plan and implement **Wicklow's woodlands of the future** with local and national stakeholders (NGOs, landowners, Coillte Nature, Coillte)

GOAL 1: County Inventory

Priority 1-3 years

- The Council will gather information on public and private trees. The Council will establish the extent of tree, woodland and hedge cover throughout the County via aerial survey (LiDAR survey, Tree mapping, *DTM, DSM, wet map*) and collate data in a GIS database.
- The Council will evaluate and purchase a (mobile) tree management system that is linked to the GIS database
- The Council will conduct tree surveys of all Council owned and managed trees and woodlands. Data will be collated in the computerised tree management system (dedicated employee required).
- The Council will review existing and proposed Tree Preservation Orders
- The Council will identify significant trees, woodland patches, groups, riparian vegetation and hedges across the County, in each urban area and in particular on land zoned for development. Document and consider significant trees for inclusion in future County Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

GOAL 2: Protocols for the annual management of trees on council land

Priority 1 year

The Council will implement a protocol and procedures for communicating about annual tree works.

- Tree surveys and inspections
- Planning tree works
- Reactive activities
- Removal of trees
- Planting of trees

GOAL 3: Inform the Public:

Priority 1-2 years

- The Council will create an area on the website dedicated to County Wicklow's trees, woodlands and hedges, with information pages dedicated to frequently asked questions, best practice methods and the Tree Maintenance protocols.
- The Council will publish the inventory of significant and/or protected trees, woodlands and hedges within each municipal district.
- The Council will publish annual Tree Maintenance programmes, and review works carried out annually
- The Council will prepare and conduct a public awareness programme about trees, Biodiversity 2030 tree management protocol and County Wicklow's' three types of forests

GOAL 4: Restore Biodiversity: County Wicklow's Ancient Forests of the Future.

Priority (2-10 years)

- The Council will engage with interest groups, especially large landowners and Coillte.
- The Council will prepare and implement a public awareness programme about biodiversity, GI and County Wicklow's Future Ancient Forests and the need for 50% protected natural habitats.
- The Council will identify areas, with partners, to be included in the 30% for 2030.

GOAL 5: Manage Mature Tree Stocks.

Priority (2-5 years)

- Develop specific management plans for the maintenance and renewal of each of County Wicklow's significant woodland areas protected as SAC, pNHA, TPO, SAAO.

GOAL 6: Create the Future for County Wicklow's Urban Woodlands, Together

Priority (2-5 years)

- Engage with interest groups, especially residents and residents' associations, schools, Coillte Nature, NGOs.

- Prepare and implement a public awareness programme about biodiversity, GI and Wicklow’s urban woodlands that aims at establishing a plan, with local stakeholders, for the expansion of urban forest cover.

- Identify Council owned and/or managed sites suitable for trees and woodland planting pilot schemes. Develop an annual tree planting programme (to be implemented under the guidance of a Tree Officer)

5-year ACTION PLAN Ref	GOAL 1: County Inventory Priority 1-2 years	Who?	When?
1.1		Council	to gather information. Establish the extent of tree, woodland and hedge cover throughout the County (LiDAR survey, Tree mapping, aerial photography, DTM, DSM, wet map). Collate data in GIS.
1.2			Evaluate and purchase a (mobile) tree management system that is linked to the GIS database
1.3			Conduct tree surveys of all Council owned and managed trees and woodlands. Data to be collated in the computerised tree management system (dedicated employee required).
1.4			Existing and proposed Tree Preservation Orders in the County to be reviewed.
1.5			Review and identify significant trees, woodland patches, groups, riparian vegetation and hedges across the County, in each urban area and in particular on land zoned for development. Document and consider significant trees for inclusion in future County Development Plans and Local Area Plans