



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

# Notes and Information from the Co Wicklow PPN Climate Conversation Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

A colorful, multi-layered banner with a red-to-yellow gradient background. It features various icons and photos: a rainbow, hands holding a globe, a person working, a speech bubble, and a group of people. The text "JOIN THE CLIMATE CONVERSATION" is prominently displayed in white on a red background. Below it, "PPN Climate Conversations" is written in white on a yellow background. At the bottom, there are logos for the National Dialogue on Climate Action and the Government of Ireland.

**JOIN THE CLIMATE CONVERSATION**

PPN Climate Conversations

National Dialogue on Climate Action

Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

## AIM OF PPN CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS

Today, we want to discuss and capture a snapshot of: our hopes and concerns for local climate action, our recommendations for the design of the Climate Action Fund, and for the Climate Action Plan.



Notes will be recorded and sent to the Department of Environment, Climate & Communications. They will be included in a report containing feedback from a series of Climate Conversations happening with PPNs, Comhairle na nÓg, and online. The report can be sent to participants and will be used by DECC to inform their drafting of the Climate Action Plan 2021 and the Climate Action Fund. The findings will also be used as part of the National Dialogue on Climate Action to engage people on climate change, motivate changes in behaviour and create enduring structures at local and national levels.

## CLIMATE ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY



Community-led climate action often relates to these themes – some may be more important in our locality than others and we can choose to focus on these in our discussions.



## Vision for Community Wellbeing in Co Wicklow

**Co Wicklow is a welcoming caring inclusive community, where a vibrant and responsive business, statutory and community sector enables communities and individuals to thrive, and where our natural, and built environment is protected and contributes to sustainable living.**

### **Environment & Sustainability**

**Our wise use of resources, and our care and connection with our environment enables all citizens to live healthy and sustainable lives.**

- All planning decisions and development support sustainability and liveability
- A cared for and accessible natural environment supports healthy communities
- All citizens have an awareness, appreciation and a strong connection to the natural environment and work together to protect it.

### **Economy & Resources**

**Our vibrant local economy supports all our citizens to live well and thrive**

- The statutory, business and community sectors recognise and value the skills of all citizens and enable them to contribute meaningfully in the local economy
- People, businesses, facilities, and services are well connected physically, electronically and socially
- Enterprise activity within the county is sensitive to our environment and people and is enabled to achieve its full economic growth and potential

### **Social & Community Development**

**Co Wicklow is an inclusive, caring and supportive community that nurtures all its citizens equally**

- Statutory, private and community services and facilities are well resourced, collaborating, coordinated and easily accessible to all.
- Diversity is recognised and valued, and everyone is included, engaged and active in their community.
- The contribution of volunteers and the community sector is recognised, valued and supported.
- The needs of our communities, particularly the more marginalised are met.

## Health (physical & mental)

**Co Wicklow is a caring community where everyone has a good level of physical and mental health**

- Accessible, coordinated and well-resourced statutory & community services & facilities support the good health of all citizens
- Our natural & built environment contributes to the good health of the community
- The health related needs of all and especially our more vulnerable citizens are met.
- Extensive and coordinated information, education and early intervention initiatives promote good physical and mental health

## Values, Culture & Meaning

**Co Wicklow is a modern welcoming, caring and inclusive community that values the environment, and the culture and heritage of its diverse citizens.**

- We preserve our culture, traditions and heritage for future generations
- The impact of diversity in enriching our community is recognized, valued and supported.
- Supports, information and resources enables volunteering and facilitates all citizens to connect, engage and participate in their community
- The importance of our natural environment is understood, recognised and appreciated.

## Participation, Democracy & Good Governance

**Transparent and accountable local governance structures and procedures allows all citizens to contribute to the development of a county that responds to their needs.**

- All statutory and community stakeholders are collaborating and ensuring that the voice of all people, and especially the more marginalised is heard
- Grass roots development is encouraged, supported, resourced and uninhibited by bureaucracy.
- Local government is participative, inclusive, accessible and responsive to the needs of the community

## Participants



### Moderators:

- Helen Lawless, PPN, West Wicklow Environmental Network
- Jim Callery, WCC Environment Officer

### Support from:

- Grainne Quinn, PPN Support Worker
- Helen Howes, PPN Resource Worker

### Participant Groups

- Wicklow Aquanauts
- Wicklow Uplands Council
- West Wicklow Environmental Network
- Grangecon Tidy Towns
- Carrig Dulra (edible education)
- Arklow Geraldines & Ballymoney GAA
- Green Greystones/Delgany Community Council
- Little Bray Family Resource & Development Centre
- South Bray Family Resource Centre
- Arklow Tidy Towns
- Africa Irish Society of Wicklow
- Baltinglass Tidy Towns



## Hopes & Concerns



### What Are Your Hopes & Concerns for Climate Action in our Community?

#### Hopes

I hope that we can shortly see the Co Wicklow Climate & Biodiversity status and forecast every week (like a weather forecast but for the Climate & Biodiversity). That WCC would broadcast this every Monday and all Wicklow media would publish it on-line and off-line

Hopes- that climate action is used as a driver for community wealth generation in all the areas of community activity, and that the plans for communities are made by and for them. This is the only way to ensure that climate action is just and equitable. Fears- that funding and policies continue to create and maintain existing structural inequalities where those with capacity and resources capture the "opportunities" but change very little.

That we can all move forward with climate action keeping in mind financial issues that can impact those already affecting some in our community

That all residents/members of the community take part. At the moment we (as Tidy Towns) are trying our hardest with these initiatives, but frustrated that the majority of farmers are still spraying, felling etc. We need an entire approach for everyone.

Provide microgeneration with proper remuneration, possible with local microgrids that would reduce dependence on ESB Networks.

Hopeful that national refund system for cans and bottles and phaseout in single used plastic

There are many amazing solutions from communities across Ireland and EU and Globally all are in community ownership- community shops, cafes, energy, etc.

Participatory budgeting with council would be a game changer!

It's difficult for people to grapple with climate change, but examples of community action make it seem possible to do something to tackle this.

## Concerns

Concern is that without real financial supports climate action will lead to increased poverty in most disadvantaged communities . Need to support people to get on board.

Hope is a waste of energy what we need is action. Urgent real action.

My concern is that we will think small and incremental and get lots of business but no Emergency Mobilisation & Action (because we did not reflect on what declaring an Emergency meant)

People need to see real consequences and responsibility on the major causes of issues, large corporations and industries, rather than placing all the emphasis on community, to ensure the community see "we are all in this together" (*just a couple of minor changes made here to improve readability*)

Concern would be that money is thrown at easy options to appear to be doing something. Education of people as to the real extent of the state of nature and the planet is paramount. No time left for sugar coating.

My concern is that my kids community (in 10 years) will have huge Carbon Pollution, huge Plastic Pollution, and no liveable Nature, Wildlife or Climate

If our food systems remain in completely private for profit system without community ownership and local food systems, we will continue to see that locally and Globally the lowest paid workers will suffer the consequences of that system- e.g. meat workers and Covid protection.

It is not seen by WCC as a real Emergency (yet). Wicklow seem way behind other (e.g. Dublin) councils

A sense of urgency needs to be communicated. Solutions need to be focused on the weakest link and not merely framed in a human context.

Upgrading of utilities as required. Our village has no mains sewerage or water and we have a county council sewage treatment plant discharging into the river. (Well above acceptable levels). This is a really simple example of something to be dealt with.

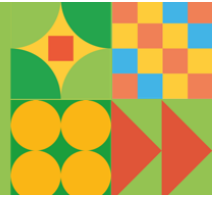
WW2 was a clear Emergency, TB was a clear Emergency, Covid-19 is / was a clear Emergency,..... Climate & Biodiversity....? well, as our Taoiseach who declared it Leo V said..... not something to worry about really....

Need to reduce mowing and rethink green spaces

I think one of the concerns people have about climate change is that it will mean giving up things we enjoy

There is frustration at agriculture, the county council etc who seem to continue with activity that is seen as damaging, without any sanction. Poor environmental enforcement is an issue in Ireland (it relates to NPWS' lack of capacity but goes way beyond that too). This is blocking change to behaviour – look at the repeated burning of the Wicklow Mountains, if those responsible were suffering penalties we wouldn't have repeated fires in the same area.

## CURRENT ACTION & AMBITIONS



### **Q1: What community-led, climate action initiatives are happening in our area that work well?**

#### **Any new ideas or existing actions we'd like to further develop?**

We need to broaden out the definition of Community Climate Action to include equity and inclusion of all citizens. Climate Justice is a better term. Much of the climate action work done in local communities automatically relates to anti-poverty work.

Food sovereignty is important - ensuring people have access to good locally sustainable produced food.

It is important that climate action and biodiversity is not considered a separate issue, it needs to be inclusive and included into all policies and practices.

It is difficult to see the impacts of current climate action work, in a scale that is of real benefit.

The Arklow Tidy Towns group has done a huge amount of work in clearing up the river walk in the town. The Evalon factory has planted over 1000 trees through an educational process. A public consultation is underway to develop a large windfarm from Greystones to Arklow.

The local authority is building energy efficient homes (with underfloor heating). This will be a great saving for tenants as well as being good for the environment

There are many examples of very good projects that preserve and protect our environment but they don't have the policy supports and mechanisms that would build them up to a significantly beneficial scale or be replicated elsewhere. Examples include: forest schools, junior naturalists programmes, adult learner programmes, re-consolidating farms etc.

Common ground a community collective in Bray has run more than 300 projects that include co-housing, edible Bray, community gardens, arts and crafts, repairs, skills exchange and education. At local level it has been possible to track progress of projects such as this from initial small beginnings.

Community supported agriculture, biodiversity projects, community energy and community shops.

Co Wicklow Tidy Towns groups have developed from planting and clean up work to environmental, biodiversity and heritage projects. Some of them have also developed sub-groups that have begun Sustainable Energy Communities

There is a lot of interest in biodiversity

There may be lessons from Covid-19 – we have given up a lot, yet we have found that some of those changes have added to our quality of life (less commuting, more time with family etc). I wonder if climate action could be looked at in terms of things that would improve our quality of life, and putting supports in place to ensure everyone has access to those benefits?

Tidy Towns is an interesting case study – the shift towards biodiversity, climate and environment in recent years seems to have been embraced by Tidy Towns groups. It would be interesting to know if that reflects increased environmental awareness, or if it's a change in Tidy Towns scoring that has motivated the groups (maybe it's both)?



The reliance on and contribution of the community volunteer was noted. The dependence of both the SEC and Community Water Projects on large scale community contribution was highlighted, with concerns that the expectation of volunteers is too great.

The link between biodiversity actions and climate change actions was discussed and clarified. For example: planting trees creates a carbon sink which is a natural solution to climate change.

People becoming overwhelmed with Climate issues – people can feel that it is too big for them to engage.

The need to look at Nature Based solutions was highlighted e.g., Trees and bogs (a lot of blanket bog in Wicklow)

The need to support the further development and promotion of the National Biodiversity Data Centre website was highlighted ([www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie)).

If we want to get people involved in climate action, we need to treat all equally. Initiatives need to be accessible and inclusive. There seems to be a perception that some communities are not interested and therefore not targeted with initiatives. Following this discussion, the following question was posed: is there a campaign that people can work on/that PPN reps could raise?

Quite a bit is happening in Wicklow.

### **Specific Local Community Initiatives**

Grangecon Tidy Towns/Go Greener Grangecon: Are involved in a number of climate action initiatives which encompass both educational and action projects. Some of the initiatives highlighted are listed below:

Waste minimisation/reducing packaging initiatives:

- no junk mail stickers produced and distributed in the community.
- Recycling collection points for crisp and sweet packaging
- Grangecon Store Cupboard (weekly market stall where people can bring containers to purchase dry goods without packaging)

Tree Planting and Biodiversity:

- Sourced trees for planting in the community: people asked to create woodlands.
- 1300 trees being planted during National Tree Week.
- Exploring with Wicklow Co. Co. re planting on County Council owned land

Measuring the carbon footprint of the village

Working towards becoming a Sustainable Energy Community

Considering Community Water Scheme

Organising Climate & Biodiversity Workshops for the local community – progress on this initiative interrupted by COVID-19 restrictions.

The Arklow Tidy Towns group have implemented a tree planting project in the town. The town has also benefited from tree planting by the Local Authority and the Evalon factory. The Tidy Towns group are also putting up bat and bird boxes.

The Arklow Oyster regeneration project and the Seaweed farm was also mentioned.

The initiative by Coillte in South Dublin to convert some forests to native woodland and enhance the amenity value was referenced (Dublin Mountains Makeover). The need to stop clear felling in some forests was highlighted.

Wicklow Aquanauts are undertaking work on surveying and raising awareness of our marine life and health. They have produced a leaflet – Under the Sea at Greystones. Which seeks to raise awareness of our local marine wildlife. They are also conducting 2 under water surveys:

- a record of marine wildlife - so that we know what we have and what we've lost.
- The effect of litter on marine life

The surveys will be loaded to the Biodiversity Ireland website. The need to support the further development and promotion of this website was highlighted.

The Bray Family Resource & Development Project spoke about the Heritage Apple Orchard established with their local community and how they are now planting from seeds. Bray Tidy Towns work in the area was highlighted and the engagement and positive response of the community was noted.

They also highlighted issues of inequality in relation to accessing some environmental actions e.g., no residents in their local estate have been given a brown bin.

The cost of changing to smokeless fuel, retrofitting homes and changing to electric car was highlighted as a barrier to change in behaviour for more disadvantaged/marginalised people.

Baltinglass Tidy Towns this is a relatively new group working to enhance the town of Baltinglass. They have undertaken the development of a woodland area for the community. There are now only planting perennials, pollinator friendly and native Irish species.

The group plans to focus on one climate action initiative in their community – 'keep cup'. With the keep cup and water bottles - refill.ie is an excellent campaign and was taken on board by Baltinglass Fairtrade in our area

#### Delgany/Greystones Community

- Green Greystones FB group to discuss Climate & Biodiversity & Community Resilience
- www.80Max.ie Quick Carbon Win campaign to cut carbon by limiting speed to 80kph.
- High Court Judicial Review to Save Delgany Village from over development with apartments to serve N11 commuters (An Bord Pleanála has approved the development).
- Trying to get a Green Campus (Tree, Water & Climate Management Plan) on every school campus and every business campus.

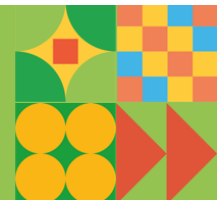
The Wicklow County Council Sustainable Goal Mapping tool was mentioned (<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/1b772459f820411d8d2948e7bca65df8%20>)

#### Other Initiatives

#StopCETA campaign (again started in Wicklow, now approved by 12 Co Cos + counting) to stop the CETA Investor Court System from preventing all progress and progressive legislation on Climate and Biodiversity. But government have not stopped yet [www.StopCETA.ie](http://www.StopCETA.ie)

#Riverwatch citizen science volunteering to monitor our water quality (chemical and biological tests). OpenLitterMap.com to report and monitor litter.

## ENABLING COMMUNITY ACTION



### **Q2: Thinking about what we'd like to do more of, or start doing, what are our recommendations for the design of the Climate Action Fund?**

There is too much concentration on large scale wind energy. Concerns highlighted in relation to the destruction of wind turbines at their end of life and the environmental impacts of disposing of the equipment.

There needs to be a mix of wind and water energy solutions and more investment in water mills.

Use community centres as energy hubs. County Wicklow had 300 historical water mills.

Replicate good examples of enabling environments e.g. The Preston Model (Lancashire, England), a community wealth building model that aspires to generate more resilient economic growth.

It fosters participatory budgeting at municipal district level

Develop a "Dept. of the Imagination"

Local Development Companies and Local Authorities need to work together to support and develop community ideas, making sure to talk to all members of the community and bringing everyone on board

Need to broaden the conversation and include everyone

Need to encourage and enable community production and not stifle it in bureaucracy. Encourage micro production of food removing regulatory barriers.

Cover and maintain the counties peat bogs in the uplands.

Funding should be available to individuals, community champions, as well as community groups. Ensure that funding is targeted at the projects that will have the most impact in the community and not just delivered by the community.

Improving Public Transport – better and more buses, consider alternatives (e.g., Trainline on N11 instead of Fossil Fuel Cars)

More off-road walking routes.

Focus on Hedge laying instead of cutting and shredding.

EV charging ports.

Need to improve energy efficiency of homes.

Install LED lighting (warm tones, not blue-rich LED)

PV solar panels– need to ensure people/communities getting paid for power contribution to the national grid.

Fund Community Radio (GCR digital radio) and others

This dialogue should come up with a list of climate-friendly products to support (like local WicklowNaturally.ie food, vegetarian food, native trees and flowers, Fairtrade coffee and fair electronics eg Fairphone) and a list of climate-unfriendly products to avoid (e.g. fracked gas, peat compost, new diesel cars)

Schemes need incentives for people to get involved.

We have a Biodiversity Emergency as well as a Climate Emergency

### **Discussion**

Public Transport: The issue caused by tree felling to develop the new bus terminus in Enniskerry was raised highlighting the need for biodiversity consideration in all developments.

The issue of the coastal trainline that is falling into the sea on the cliff edge was raised – current route is not sustainable.

Off Road Walking Routes: No off-road walking routes in or around Grangecon except for walking and cycling on main roads.

Hedgerows: Issues around hedgerow cutting out of session was also discussed and clarify around the rules on this was sought, are there exceptions made for the County Council?

Need 10m margins away from every hedge and 25m margins away from every stream. WCC could put this in the County Development Plan

The need for Public bodies to lead on actions was highlighted.

WCC funding under the Active Travel Programme from Department of Environment, Climate & Communications for the development of more off-road walking and cycling routes was discussed. Concerns were expressed that the team of 12 appointed to work on this includes nine engineers of various grades, a technical officer, an administrator and a communications person. There is no provision within the line-up for a Biodiversity Officer – as mentioned above, biodiversity consideration is needed in all such developments.

Energy Efficiency of Homes: Upgrading of public buildings can be impacted by issues regarding ownership/management of the building.

## Microgeneration

More action is needed on microgeneration and support for communities to provide their own electricity. There also needs to be more financial supports and benefits to encourage people to generate their own electricity e.g using photovoltaics and sell some back to the grid.

Renewable energy is vital. Wind generation is unreliable and already this year, nearly national blackout has increased demand with cold, calm weather due to low generation levels.

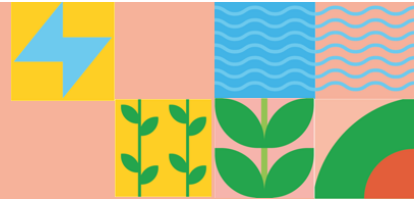
Microgeneration of energy is a great social leveller if there is a payback tariff, as they can be an income source. Reduced energy bills for everyone and income. If every house, shed and Community building could have photovoltaic panels on the roof, not only would they be able to use what they need but would be able to export to the grid. These obviously generate electricity in daylight hours, are light dependent not sun dependent.

Currently there is no payment for the electricity produced by microgeneration, and it is mainly for self-consumption. In June there are plans for are some payments to be made, but suggestions are only 30% of the electricity produced will be paid for. This is a disincentive to invest. The capital outlay is relatively expensive if there is this type of control. It also does not support the concept of trying to reduce carbon emissions by half by 2030.

Microgeneration and microgrids are the way forward as electricity should be consumed as close to the source of production, otherwise there is loss to the distribution network.

Microgeneration may be from several sources - photovoltaic panels, water, wind. Microgrids are local electrical networks, usually owned by communities. The advantages of these is it smoothes electrical distribution and reduces widespread power outages.

## INFORMING NATIONAL POLICY



### **Q3: Reflecting on local concerns and ambitions, what broader suggestions do we have for the Climate Action Plan?**

We need more infrastructure e.g. phone, broadband and more frequent and connected public transport, particularly for rural areas.

People are very dispersed, if we use more electric cars we will need more charging points. Tourists are finding themselves with no power to charge cars in rural areas.

Cycle lanes do not work in rural areas

Electric cars are not affordable for the majority of the population and there appears to be challenges in servicing and maintaining them. Need to help make them and other technologies more affordable.

The government needs to develop strong clear policies to stop waste primarily and reduce waste secondly e.g. place a total ban on plastics. These policies must be efficiently implemented. Voice Ireland have good examples of action for Zero Waste solutions

The smokey fuels ban needs to be implemented so that it is adhered to properly

The government must support the ordinary person and communities ahead of corporate groups.

The government needs to legislate for food sovereignty and adopt policies that ensure balanced food production that will make Ireland more self-sufficient

The government should adopt a rights-based approach to all policy development that would ensure that all citizens can live healthy and sustainable lives and that young people have a better future

All planning decisions and development support sustainability and liveability.

A cared for and accessible natural environment supports healthy communities.

All citizens have an awareness, appreciation and a strong connection to the natural environment and work together to protect it.

There is need to look into the resistance to dealing with climate change, the Department needs to understand the barriers if it's to surmount them. Hope is key too – hopelessness is disempowering.

Policy drivers are needed to support better farming outcomes that maintain their livelihoods

Wicklow County Council recently received word that it is to get funding for a team of 12 to work for five years on Active Travel – developing cycle routes etc. That team of 12 includes nine engineers of various grades, a technical officer, an administrator and a communications person. There is no provision within the line-up for a Biodiversity Officer. That's surprising and disappointing coming from Eamon Ryan's department, we'll have many repeats of the scenario outlined last night from Enniskerry - the removal of trees to accommodate a new bus stop. The Active Travel programme should in my view be changed to include a Biodiversity Officer in each local authority area – we have a Biodiversity Emergency as well as a Climate Emergency.

Empower communities to say what they need.

Change is needed and it is essential that all communities are engaged.

Climate Justice – need to enable everyone to engage. Schemes need to be accessible to all.

Incentivise Farmers to change some methods (e.g. stop spraying and leave hedgerow corridors). It was highlighted that most farmers are working to care for the land and the difference between agribusiness and small farmers was highlighted.

Farming caught in a system that rewards output over all else!

Establishment of Transition Towns across Co. Wicklow – see Kinsale and UK examples. Consider what is needed to set in motion; SEC and Local food co-op suggested as starting points. See the book "From What Is? to What If?"

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



This report will be sent to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC).

This will be synthesized into a **Climate Conversations Report** containing feedback from all PPN Climate Conversations.

Notes from each PPN will be contained in the Appendix. All personal names will be removed but organisations will be listed.

### **Call for Evidence.**

DECC is asking Climate scientists, experts and industry to share their data-based technical proposals to support development of the Plan. They want to hear views on the cross-sectoral and sectoral implications of the overall increase in climate ambition, and proposals for additional policies and measures across sectoral areas, including estimations of the associated greenhouse gas emissions reductions and/or increased resilience to the locked-in climate change impacts.

To take part in the Call for Evidence visit: <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/5d554-call-for-expert-evidence-climate-action-plan-2021/>

### **Climate Conversation**

DECC also wants to hear from households and communities about what Government can do to further support them as part of Ireland's journey to net zero. Views received will help inform the design of the wider National Dialogue on Climate Action and will help to engage and communicate with more people on Ireland's climate action in the future.

To take part in the Climate Conversation visit: <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/5bd95-climate-conversation-climate-action-plan-2021/>