

CABA SPC Meeting, Feb. 19th 2022 by Zoom

Present: Cllr. Lourda Scott (Cathaoirleach), Cllr. Peir Leonard, Cllr. Rory O'Connor, Cllr. Dermot O'Brien, Cllr. Jodie Neary, Ms Sharon Jackson, Mr Justin Ivory, Ms Franny Raven

In attendance: Ms Breege Kilkenny, Ms Jackie Carroll, Ms Mary Cahill, Ms Deirdre Burns, Mr Jim Callery, Mr Marc Devereux

Presentation given by Mary Cahill, of the Climate Action Team on the:

Draft Glyphosate/roundup weedkiller/plant control Policy for Wicklow Council:

The Intention is to limit as much as possible the use of round up across all 5 Municipal Districts. WCC aspires to make public land pollinator-friendly and is aware that studies on round-up point to it being carcinogenic. The draft policy proposes:

- To reduce the use of round-up against the 2020 baseline
- A small number of staff and contractors will be trained and registered to use round-up against stubborn invasive species at the most effective stage of the plant's growth cycle
- Round-up will be stored centrally and will have to be requested
- Users will be required to record where and why round-up was used on a special form
- The use of roundup will be recorded in the monthly Chief Executive's Report
- A WCC App will record the use of round-up.
- A case study is being completed by a caretaker at Claremont who will comment on plant management techniques he is using to reduce the use of weedkiller by 80%

A lively discussion made numerous suggestions, including;

- This App should be open for the public to view
- A rota would be best to assign use of the new foamsteam machine (which kills weeds using steam and is currently in use in Bray MD and at the harbour)
- Spraying weedkiller at base of trees so the base looks clean, neat and devoid of weeds is a practice that needs to end.
- Thanks again to the Tidy Town groups who are so quick to implement improvements to the care of biodiversity & who would be the well placed to speak with new Resident Associations about the care of planting and landscaping on new estates
- The Policy needs to speak of managing plants, not killing 'weeds'
- Manual weeding is to be encouraged, tools could be supplied to Resident Associations and Tidy Towns
- Any training course will need to be offered also at district engineer level, so everyone is on the same page. The district engineers welcomed the Tree Policy at a recent monthly meeting.

- Refusing to give out round-up is the best way to limit its use.

Update on the Arklow Decarbonisation Zone, given by Jim Callery, Environmental Officer

- Data shows that 35% of the Carbon emissions in Arklow came from residential sources, 25% from commercial sources and 30% from transport
- 24 people representing different sectors attended the February Stakeholder meeting.
- The Implementation Plan should be ready by the end of March
- The Sustainable Energy Master Plan is being prepared
- Climate Action Workshops are being planned and posters designed to get the message out
- Funding will be available for all sectors
- The SEAI funds an energy audit for any business spending more than €10K on energy.
- Local sports clubs spread the word

The new Energy Bureau

- WCC are collaborating with Kildare and Meath County Councils in setting up an Energy Bureau. Executive, Senior Executive and Community Energy Officers will come together to assist Sustainable Energy Communities
- The tender has gone out to set up the bureau and put staff in place, with the tenders to be assessed and first appointments made by the end of March. (The deadline for the tender was Feb 28th)
- The Director of Services, Ms Breege Kilkenny, helped develop the Memo of Understanding with the SEAI and she thanked Mary Cahill and Jim Callery for all their work in the background.

Update on the Tree Management Policy

- The updated Tree Management Policy for Wicklow Council lands has been published
- Four of the protocols still need to be put in place with the MDs and forms have been drawn up showing how to achieve these in easy steps
- Protocol 1 calls for WCC's IT section to develop an app to record all operations with respect to trees. The IT section will develop the app recording the use of glyphosate first, because it is simpler, and then tackle the Tree Management app.
- Minister Darragh O'Brien's Department announced €600,000 this year has been set aside to recruit full-time Biodiversity Officers, of which there are currently only five (of which one in Wexford). Wicklow employs one full-time Heritage/ Biodiversity Officer and Director of Services, Breege Kilkenny, is pressing Wicklow's case for full-time Biodiversity hours to implement and progress a range of new biodiversity policies, including the updated Tree Policy, the updated Marine Plan, Peatland Restoration, etc, etc. Wicklow CoCo carried over a €2 million euro debt from

2021...Ms Kilkenny believed the Wicklow stands a good chance of getting the extra hours because it can point to a proven track record in drawing up and implementing innovative policies.

Justin Ivory, the PPN rep for East Wicklow, reminded the meeting that he would be happy to meet with County Wicklow planning officials to discuss with them upwards of twenty easy-win ways to incorporate more biodiversity into Wicklow’s planning permissions. These useful tips are already in use in other jurisdictions.

WCC/ Wicklow County Council’s Green Team

In order to embed climate action within the organisation, WCC invited WCC staff from all sections to join the new WCC Green Team. Training was provided by the CARO/Climate action Regional office, headquartered in Naas. Terms of reference were drawn up. 24 staff volunteers attended 2 meetings and came up with 12 actions they would like to pursue. A climate action champion has been elected to each section. Paper towels are to be phased out and replaced by hand dryers. There will be a talk on retrofitting their own homes and a demo electric car will be available for staff to test drive on a given date. The competition to decide the Green Team logo will be run through the Wicklow library service. Primary Schools will be invited to present their version of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Any other business:

- Reminder that NORI, Native oyster restoration would be of interest for a presentation, outside a meeting, if necessary.
- The provision of Community Allotments is a policy strongly supported in the Community Development plan and a member of the Blessington Allotment Committee would present. Cllr Scott and Cllr Leonard will discuss the role of SPCs/Strategic Policy Committees in relation to the provision of allotments.
- Hedgerows were not included in the updated WCC Tree Policy. Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer remarked that they were worthy of a Policy in their own right. Jim Callery announced in March that a €15,300 allocation of funded had been secured to carry out the drone survey of Co Wicklow’s hedgerows. Cllr. Neary said there was a lot of talk about and around hedgerow protection in her area. Cllr Lourda Scott and Mary Cahill said hedgerows would be in focus at the time of the review of the Tree Policy in 12 to 18 month’s time after publication, so by Easter 2023.

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The next meeting will be on Thursday, April 28th, 10.30 – 1 pm, in the Council Chamber
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