



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

Notes and Information from the Co Wicklow PPN Climate Conversation Wednesday 29th June 2022

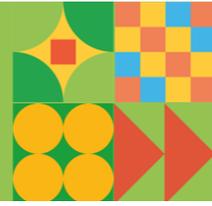
JOIN THE CLIMATE CONVERSATION

PPN Climate Conversations

National Dialogue on Climate Action

Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Participants



25 Participants represented 20 PPN Member Groups

80 MAX

An Tairseach

Arklow Geraldines Ballymoney GAA Club

Arklow Pyramid Project Heritage Group

Bray Family Resource & Development Project

Brittas Bay Coastcare Group

Carraig Dúlra

Co. Wicklow & District Football League

Delgany Community Council

Greystones Tidy Towns

Hollywood Community Forum

Kilbride & Lakeside Music Committee

Lacken Tidy Villages

Tearmann Community Garden

The Bray Head U3A Group

West Wicklow Environmental Network

Wicklow Aquanauts

Wicklow Photographic Club/Wicklow Town ICA

Wicklow Planning Alliance

Wicklow Town Active Retirement Association

Introduction

This is the second year that Co Wicklow PPN has collaborated with the Department Environment, Climate & Communications (DECC) to facilitate Climate Change Conversations with communities. The input from these conversations informs The Climate Action Plan.

Our conversation took place online on Wednesday 29th June 2022. The conversation was themed around 4 questions:

- What comes into your mind when you think about Climate Change?
- Do you know what you can do, or what are you doing and what are you willing to do to address Climate Change?
- What would you like the Government/Local Authority to do to address Climate Change?
- How do you think we could get more people involved in the debate about Climate Change and perhaps encourage them to act?

Participants were grouped into small workshops to respond to the questions. We are presenting the responses to these questions as close as possible to their articulation.

The topic of Climate Change and Biodiversity loss is serious and is causing great concern. In the final section of the meeting the whole group were asked to: Share Something that's happening that shows hope

We are grateful to those who joined us, and those that supported our Climate Change Conversation. A report has been issued back to DECC.

What comes into your mind when you think about Climate Change?

- It's bleak and scary
- It's hard to know how to motivate people, most people don't want to know
- It needs cross party support in government, it'll cost money, it's got to start with government
- More optimistic, walk instead of driving, save money, healthier and save environment, children are more motivated.
- Not all children are motivated, they are big consumers. Younger children have less agency. Older people seem to see it more clearly
- Need leadership from government, far too much plastic packaging
- Wherever we look it's there, but will we do anything about it?
- Retrofitting & electric cars costs too much money
- We need a top down and bottom-up approach
- Adults and Children are becoming more informed but there are still not enough people taking Climate Change seriously.
- We are all negligent in some ways and need to wake up to this emergency
- There are so many scientists and experts that know about the cause, effect of Climate Change and who are developing ideas to combat it, but the information isn't coming across well enough for everyone to take it on board

- Non-renewable energy is still predominant. Renewables should have been developed and implemented long ago.
- Forcing people on low incomes to pay taxes toward retrofitting & electric cars is like an inverse Robin Hood culture
- €75 to fill a small Nissan car with petrol when aviation fuel is tax free is unfair.
- We should be paying the true cost of travel.
- We need to consider Climate Justice and we need to consider this in a global context. We need to support poorer countries and recognise that we are all in this together
- We need leadership and creativity
- Change is coming that cannot be reversed and we are facing a real emergency. We need to mobilise a lot more people now
- If we don't do something now, we will have an influx of people who have been forced to leave their country because of the impact of Climate Change. People don't think of that
- Trees and need for them - too much destruction and need to plant lots more
- Switch to 80 kmph - 1 ton reduction in emissions per year (www.80.max.ie)
- Switch to renewables
- Urban areas too many people driving large SUVs and driving children to school in them.
- Bad weather events more often.
- Too much waste collection – not enough sorting of waste into appropriate bins for composting and recycling.
- Urgent need to treat Climate like COVID
- 30 years ago, only needed to make small actions, now urgent need to do much more
- Brittas Bay area/tourist area – traffic management could reduce car emissions.
- Public transport is needed in the evenings and at weekends
- Urgent funding needed for Climate Action Plans and civic engagement. Need to be less bureaucratic, innovative, and responsive
- How to address emergencies e.g. During COVID entire industries changed production (from whiskey to hand sanitizer)
- Actions are not urgent enough
- All Ireland initiative needed for SDGs - NW have good action plans
- All network actions very important
- Government is focused on individual actions too much (fossil fuel actions, data center using huge energy resources)
- Stronger SDG goals (need to get out of fuel poverty retrofitting- real equality needed, problem with swing to populist side)
- Solar panels
- Climate Change seems far away, Biodiversity loss seems immediate
- Topic seems Vast and difficult
- Flooding threat to the East coast of Ireland
- Pollution problems in water courses
- Unpredictable weather worldwide – causing flooding and forcing people to leave homes - Global impact
- How we first became aware of how big the problems were/how important Nature is to us
- Earth now in the control of one species – Humans. Need to change our way of living and habits, but also to maintain balance, example have some wild areas, and also sports pitches
- Climate anxiety is a real condition, including among children

- Sustainability – we need our needs without comprising the needs of the next generations to meet their needs.
 - We all need to take note that there are limits to everything
 - Balance to be struck between wild areas, areas for trees and play areas etc
 - Need to avoid chemical weedkillers that damage the soil and persist
 - Reference to films An Inconvenient Truth and Look Up! To Thomas Berry, Dream of the Earth and to the encyclical of Pope Frances ‘Our Common Home’
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Do you know what you can do, or what are you doing and what are you willing to do to address Climate Change?

- There is very little individuals can do. People who have money to invest should be encouraged to invest in renewable energy. Reduce/stop plastic packaging
- The use of plastic gloves in fish shops and changing them is excessive
- We can stop buying these items, change things at home. We can plant food and trees.
- There is a lot of building going on, causing destruction of the environment. Trees are being felled and hedgerows removed. These need to be replaced. People are unaware of how important greenery is to us. If there are housing targets, there should also be tree planting targets
- We need stronger legal protection for the natural environment
- Concerned about the marine environment because its invisible to many. Every conversation about the environment should include the sea. Some of our sea species are declining and many are under pressure. The sea helps to regulate Climate Change and produces oxygen. It provides 1/5 of animal protein for our diet as well as being an important part of our recreation activities
- All our water systems need to be protected and maintained properly. Some groups are doing great work in protecting local water systems (e.g. Three Trout’s Stream) with support from the local authority water programme
- Our mountain scapes & hillsides are also in poor condition. They are being too heavily grazed. Our peatlands are also severely damaged. We need to understand that our natural environment is our life support system and if it dies then we do too.
- Climate Change & Loss of biodiversity are two systems that are massively under pressure. We need to jointly and equally address them as one will support the other
- Everyone thinks you can leave it someone else
- Donegal houses are crumbling into dust because of lack of regulation on quarries. This should not happen in any civilised country. Regulation was eased in 1993. Question the government’s commitment to the environment when 10 year old houses need to be re-built. If aviation was subject to the same lack of regulation no one would fly in a plane.

- There should be more monetary help provided at European level to help farmers transition from current practices to more environmental ones. We don't pay the true cost of agriculture, it is subsidised, these subsidies should be used to promote better environmental practices. Need to work more with the farmers to support them to make the changes needed without fear.
- Reduce/stop food waste
- We produce a huge surplus and some of those things are worthless e.g., all the plastic "keep bottles"
- Supermarkets need to stop encouraging people to buy more than they need
- We need personal change as well as national change and we need to talk about these changes and encourage others to make them
- We need to take more inspiration from war time practises in relation to reuse and recycling
- We need more information about the impact of bad habits and the impact of good habits.
- We need information about the recycling statistics and their benefits. We need this information from trusted sources. We need clear information on how to recycle properly to ensure that people are not put off by confusion and that there's no worthless contamination
- Concerns that products are built for obsolescence rather than sustainable use. This should be researched, and heavy fines should be levied if this is found to be true.
- Promote the circular economy
- We need to act like there's an emergency (because there is)
- Personal change can be powerful, and habit forming and can enable people to be confident champions for climate action
- Monitoring own Car Emissions
- ICA group locate native trees to collect seeds 12/15 different species
 - Gave out 3000 trees for planting last year
 - growing seeds and giving out to plant
 - native seeds 3k Coillte (Alder, birch)
 - ICA starting own nursery
- One day a week should be 'walk to school'
- Can we coordinate with GAA groups? Could we link with Arklow GAA?
- Tidy towns stop spraying, planting native trees
- Ireland is small, what is our influence?
- Individuals at community level will make a difference if they come together
- Insulate our houses, expensive, need hubs, independent advice, recommended contractors, to know that attic insulations costs a few hundred euro and makes a big difference.
- Issue of Cost/affordability of insulation, electric car etc.
- 3 Rs helpful concept
- Reduce speed to 80 kmph
- Planting Trees
- Kits from local libraries and two from Green Greystones that do an energy audit of your home and appliances Reduce speed, lessen petrol consumption
- Too few buses, public transport expensive, long waits, infrequent services, e.g., 132 Bus Eir-eann, West Wicklow issues of very few bus stops on the route. Wicklow town to Arklow infrequent service. Urban/Rural divide.
- Audit of Local takeaways commitment to recycled materials.
- Sorting litter. Local mobile recycling truck, much appreciated, asked if materials sorted on arrival, interested to hear again that rubbish must be clean, loose and dry

- Litter sorting, Recycling should be done in school. COVID impact as children asked to bring lunch litter home. Green schools' numbers have actually declined.
 - Solar panels on school roofs, please reduce planning permission levy for schools and businesses and farms, get grid upgraded and sell excess back to grid. Also consider for Farm building roofs.
 - District heating good for rural cluster of houses.
 - Wind Turbine no sound from end of garden, used to pylons, go to windfarm outside Arklow, great hike for families, see turbines up close. People to visit windfarms, to help with education and allay fears. In Scotland energy generated from one turbine in each scheme given to local community.
 - We need to communicate a stable climate and rich biodiversity as a right, this is more empowering than telling the sad facts. Need to be more positive in communication about Climate change.
 - Efforts we make to limit Climate Change will involve inconvenience in our daily lives
 - Messages around climate change need to be targeted differently to different audiences
 - Changes to our way of doing things will be inconvenient. The motivation to act may come from different places: worry for grandchildren, desire for justice, hope of improving own health and wellbeing, etc
 - 800 Children in Wicklow Town writing letters requesting that weedkiller not be used
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What would you like the Government/Local Authority to do to address Climate Change?

- It needs to come from the top down – like taxing the plastic bags
- Change needs to start with the government
- We need the government to park the politics and work together
- Burning turf needs to stop & government must be strong in tackling these hard issues
- Government & big business needs to tackle the excessive and unnecessary packaging on supermarket shelves and in shops
- Government needs to think about the long-term impact of policy change and its effect on the environment e.g., privatising the bin collection services has resulted in an increase of dumping and illegal (often poisonous) bonfires.
- The government need to become better at implementing their own policies and following their own guidelines
- Climate Change & Biodiversity training should be provided to all sections of the local authority.
- No essential services should be privatised
- Develop videos to get all the necessary information across
- Public transport is a social service, and it should be massively funded to provide much more connectivity. It needs to be available and fit for purpose. The reduction in fares is helpful

but the necessary connections for people to access work, health services, educational establishments and social activities aren't there. Public transport should be free and available.

- The N11 was a traffic jam every day prior to the pandemic. A combination of homeworking & public transport is needed to stop this from recurring
- Research and compare the costs of providing a state service at free or reduced rates to the costs & impact of privatising these services e.g. The cost of providing state bin collection services in comparison to the clearing up of dumping & bonfires
- Face up to the vested interests.
- Expand the conversation
- There is a need for facts so people can have the conversations in their family, community etc. Trustworthy information that is easily available and can support change
- Biodiversity officer for Wicklow County Council
- Polluters pay policy actions needed (high costs for SUV's) Not supporting SDGs
- National survey shows 43% support cutting emissions by reducing speed limit to 80kmph
- Carbon tax on fuel has led to no reduction in carbon emissions
- Planting trees - facilitate it happening and record where they are planted
- Switch over to 100% renewable electricity
- NRA need to review speed limits nationally – 80 kmph on small windy country roads too high
- Lobby TDs
- Reduce energy and water consumption
- Local Authorities should be leading the way by their example
- There should be less emphasis on Data Centers
- Local authorities and government lead by example: e.g. In Barcelona/Basque region:
 - pedestrian areas no cars
 - speed limits reduced to 30 kmph
- Amount of pain prepared to endure depends on Government
- Government should take away fossil fuel subsidy
- Taxes need to be fair and equitable
- Deliberative democracy perspective
- Government don't do consultations well – they need to make sure they are hearing all voices. They really need to get serious about citizen engagement – there is a need for Mini citizen assemblies
- Local democracy is failing hugely. The key question is 'who decides'
- Look at Windfarms
- Support community renewable energy initiatives
- Accessible and affordable infrastructure to support switch to electric car, public transport and active travel.
- Request for WCC to open a composting facility in Greystones, Co Wicklow Partnership runs courses and WCC opens composting facilities if community supplies a secure site with access to water. Questions asked about smells, raw no smell, vermin not drawn to a well-run facility.
- Request for stronger legislation to protect trees from felling.
- Hedgerows need stronger protections, since they are wildlife corridors
- Request that Govt and WCC look into reducing cost of license and simplify the certification process, so Ireland has more than current 2% of land farmed organically (Other countries farm 25% organically).

- Need to encourage more farms to go organic.
 - Large intensive farms to be paid to set aside say 10% of their land for Nature. Role of Teagasc and Government in encouraging the change in practices.
 - Switch things around so everyone is involved in some way in combating Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss. All section of society involved in some way to contributing to a slowdown in Climate Change
 - More public messaging about recycling. All Plastic recycling
 - Upgrade electricity grid
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How do you think we could get more people involved in the debate about Climate Change and perhaps encourage them to act?

- It's hard to know how to motivate people
- We need strong leadership
- Our national broadcasters e.g., RTE should do more coverage on the impact of Climate Change & Biodiversity Loss, and also advertise the mitigation efforts that are happening
- The advertising seems to have remained the same it needs to be updated and designed to engage a diverse audience
- We need to hear about initiatives that the local authority might be undertaking to become climate neutral. What their aims, objectives and targets are
- We need to start encouraging small actions and support the small actions to become bigger ones.
- It has to come from individuals but for impact we need support from NGOs and legislation
- We need to learn from other countries. Some are producing huge emissions, but some less developed countries are living carbon neutral
- We need to keep Climate Change at the top of every agenda
- The impacts of Climate Change must be made more visible and local. The signs of destruction due to Climate Change are not very visible in Ireland so people don't think it affects them so much. Highlight (visually) the increasing sea levels and how that will impact Ireland
- Need for more Education: children and staff in companies
- Need to capture 'hearts and minds'
- Funding education for adults – explain positive changes/actions they can make
- Reduce speed 2.1 million drivers
 - reduce speed
 - measure reduction in fuel consumption
 - impetus for further action
 - use things that can be measured e.g., speed limits and tree planting
- More education in second level schools
- Focus on SUV's

- Wind farms have been supporting local communities. SSE is an excellent example in Arklow. They sponsored the Round Ireland yacht race
- Education is the key
- Science is clear in relation to weather (Professor John Sweeney)
- Climate change is happening
- We are reaching tipping points sooner than expected
- Parents and kids
- Green Survey by TASK
 - Education
 - Trust in Local Authorities – survey findings
 - 51% trusted scientists
 - 37% trusted families and
 - 13% TDs and Councillors
- People feel disempowered and undermined
- Need more community gardens, school gardens etc.
- Need to build bridges between environmentalists and farmers
- Shift happening in food system
- Children & Young people - Not overburden them, invite them along perhaps once a month to be together and give their opinion
 - Facilitate children to have contact with Nature, leave school grounds and go on a big walk, instead of always in playground playing sports.
 - Have children experience Nature and not be uneasy walking on uneven ground of a forest. Teachers lack confidence in their Biodiversity. Knowledge and need support to do more with biodiversity, pupils respond very positively to all climate actions in schools...yet not yet a school subject
- Speak up within your family and friend groups
- Local newspaper articles
- Nightly weather forecast could be used to further education people - refer to Carbon levels in atmosphere and what the future might look like Met Eireann website great
- Many different audiences so need for different approached to spread the work within different groups. Difficult to change consciousness and very difficult to change our way of life
- The young trust and follow influencers/celebrities – adults seldom know which celebrities.
- Some of best campaigns are those done locally, involving a local person with influence. The new GAA Green clubs will have huge influence because the GAA is well known and well regarded
- This winter a lot of people will be very worried about the cost of living therefore we need to reflect on how the message of Climate Change is communicated to people who are doing their best and can't afford to do more.

Share something that's happening that shows hope

- When people are given the opportunity to get together and share ideas, it highlights that there is great strength when communities work together
- There is a lot of change coming from local level
- We run permaculture design courses and engage with 14-16 people every year. There is evidence that there are projects happening in every county in Ireland and the networks are growing.
- The ICA has established a Climate & Biodiversity Action Committee and over 8,000 people are involved in it
- Positivity in relation to farming from the Farming for Nature programme. Two Wicklow farmers have been nominated for awards through this programme
- The GAA are establishing a Green Clubs Programme. The themes in the programme include energy, water, waste, biodiversity, travel & transport
- Tidy Towns are also doing good work in relation to protecting and maintaining our environment
- WCC won an award for developing a Sustainable Development Goal mapping tool. Community/civic groups can go online and map their activities to one or more of the SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals | Climate Action & Biodiversity | wicklow.ie](#)
- Wicklow PPN developed a video that illustrates what the SDGs are, how the actions of groups work towards the SDG targets and how groups can record their work on the WCC SDG mapping tool [Co Wicklow Community Groups Working Towards Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals Targets - YouTube](#)