

Report to PPN members from CABA SPC

Meeting of June 22nd, Council Chambers

PRESENT:

Cllr. Lourda Scott, Cathaoirleach
Cllr. Peir Leonard
Cllr. Dermot O'Brien
Cllr. Rory O'Connor
Cllr. Jodie Neary
Ms. Franny Raven, Comhairle na nOg
Mr. Gary McKenzie, Glen Fuels
Mr. Tom Shortt, IFA
Mr. Michael Storan, Construction Industry
Ms. Sharon Jackson, PPN, West Wicklow
Mr. Justin Ivory, PPN, East Wicklow

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services
Ms. Jackie Carroll, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Mary Cahill, Climate Action officer
Mr. Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer
Mr. Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer
Mr. Tom Fox, Senior Executive Engineer

Minutes agreed with corrections. Example: the B-lines Project is for full wildlife corridors, not just insect pathways

Arising from the Minutes:

Tidy Towns: While the emphasis on litter control, landscaping, the need to remove 'weeds' and to beautify the built areas is now being broadened in many Tidy towns groups to include the commitment to biodiversity the incongruous nature of the competition and its marking was discussed. The awarding of marks on one hand for neat and tidy was at conflict with the marking for biodiversity actions. This has been manifest recently by the surge of tidying up by local TT groups in advance of the competition, with many observations of actions being taken which are damaging to biodiversity (even by groups that are also taking good actions for biodiversity). This led to a conversation around a name change for the TT moving it away from the traditional neat and tidy and conflict of interests, and more reflective of a shift of focus. 'Living Towns' was one suggested alternative name. There is also a need to restructure the marking so that biodiversity/climate actions are not just separate little sections but a theme running across all activities. After the judges have adjudicated for this year, members of CABA SPC will write to the Board of Tidy Towns and seek to engage with them in this discussion.

Wicklow County Council's revised **Glyphosate Policy** will be presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on July 23rd. This new Policy provides for glyphosate/round-up weedkiller to be used very sparingly, after permission for its supply from a single issue point has been signed off by the supervisor in charge, who is trained to assess the case for its use in that instance. A concern was expressed that all scientists did not agree on a blanket ban on the use of round-up. Wicklow County Council sanctions its use by trained personnel in the removal of certain very tenacious named invasive species. CABA SPC looks forward to an update from the discussions at The Joint Oireachtas Committee. Wicklow's revised Glyphosate Policy will now be ratified at the next Council Plenary in July.

Update on membership of this SPC:

- **Welcome** to the new Representative of the Construction Industry, Mr Michael Storan of MJS Civil Engineering.ie

- **A sad goodbye** to Ms Franny Raven, Rep. of Comhairle na nOg, who leaves to pursue her studies. She was commended for her hard work on behalf of Comhairle na nOg by Cllr. Dermot O'Brien.

Correspondence: Links to a Training webinar online to be sent out to all members

A Presentation on the East Coast Erosion Project was given by Mr Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer

- North of Bray: old landfill being dealt with by Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown local authority
- Bray Head to Greystones: Rock armour will be upgraded
- North Beach: Narrow break-water islands will be constructed off-shore to slow down the waves and let the beach grow naturally. These islands are therefore self-managing.
- Greystones to Newcastle, as above
- Newcastle to Wicklow Harbour: Upgrade and extend rock armour

€125 million in funding has been secured for these works.

- Also: North of Arklow Bay: Fencing, signage and access-control measures, put in place by the Heritage service of Wicklow County Council over several years, have managed the biodiversity potential of the dune, and it has again become a habitat for native species of plant
- North of Arklow Harbour: The revetement installed in 1989 will be refurbished and new artificial islands constructed offshore to 'nourish' the beach and regenerate the dune

The next steps are for Brittas Bay and Arklow Bay to seek funding from the OPW/Office of Public Works as construction projects in adaptation to coastal erosion. The steering committee of the OPW will meet with engineers and others of the Irish Rail CIPP/Coastal Infrastructure Protection Programme.

The soft engineering/nature-based solutions represented in these erosion adaptation projects were welcomed, notably by Cllr. Peir Leonard, who suggested value would be added for recreation and tourism, with seals, for example, congregating on the break-water islands and potential for the farming of oysters among the rock armour.

In reply, it was concurred that pilot schemes aimed at adding biodiversity value would be a part of the discussions held at meetings of the multi-disciplinary teams starting in September

Plans to increase capacity at Dublin Port may involve developing a port at Braemar, north of Dublin and/or at Arklow. Both are sufficiently deep water.

The Following Points arose from the various Points Brought to the Meeting for Discussion:

The Marine Planning Act has been adopted. The high tide mark is the foreshore. Wicklow County Council currently has statutory powers only as far as the water's edge. The big issue for the local authorities is that is a huge increase in responsibility with no obvious extra resourcing available. Going forward local authorities will have responsibility for the nearshore, which is defined as up to 3 nautical miles from the coast. Ecologists need to be consulted at the very beginning of any proposed measure. Groups like Bird Watch, Coast Watch and Fair Seas would also make important recommendations if consulted early enough. The National Parks and Wildlife Service and Irish Rail will be involved in all plans to ensure the safety of coastal rail track. LAWPRO and IFI are working to open sections of river back up to migrating fish. The River Basin Management Plan deals with water quality.

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Plan is expected to go to public consultation over the summer, should CABA SPC consider how to engage the Wicklow public and communities with this consultation?

***Wicklow needs to formulate its policy on the die-back of ash trees in hedgerows, since three-quarters of the trees in Irish hedgerows are ash and within 10 years many of them will have been killed by ash-die back disease. The advice is to leave the sick trees in situ. As deadwood they will be valuable habitat. The one third which may survive will be resistant to the disease and their seeds will be gathered to germinate a future healthy stock of ash trees. This advice should be formally written up into a **Hedgerow Management Policy/Plan**. Farmers need to be involved as the vast majority of hedgerows are on privately-owned land.

At the National Biodiversity Conference, early June this year, Minister Noonan promised a biodiversity officer for each of the 31 local authorities within 3 years. According to the PPN rep for East Wicklow, Justin Ivory, the hold up in appointment of the 6 BOs announced for this year is ongoing internal department debate/discussion as to what level these new BOs should be assigned at and what their role description should be. WCC still do not know if they will be granted one of these 6 BO positions. If yes, the hope is still there that appointment would happen before year end (but the window for that to happen is rapidly shrinking).

***Before their appointment, this SPC could put out a call to all interested Groups to develop their local biodiversity plans and have them ready and available.

Two thirds of the area of Wicklow is in its uplands and forestry. Every community finds a need to manage the uplands and this SPC needs to respond to these concerns. A June 2022 report on noteworthy.ie presents a report on the need to manage grazing on the uplands of Ireland. It is felt by some in the farming community that this report gives little weight to the intensive grazing by deer which degrades habitat quality for other species across the Wicklow Mountains. The link to this investigative report is: <https://www.noteworthy.ie/over-the-hill-5760329-Jun2022/>. There are some small-scale initiatives being taken to address overgrazing in Wicklow, but it needs more funding and action on a landscape scale.

***The PPN Rep for East Wicklow stated that Wicklow County Council needs a Parks Department. CABA SPC could recommend to Council Plenary that they seek a Parks Department. ***Constituents can also lobby the local Minister, Simon Harris, TD, Green Party TD, Stephen Matthews and former Chair of CABA SPC, TD Jennifer Whitmore.

Climate Action Plan Updates:

- The Hedgerow Survey is out to tender
- Each municipal district manages its own trees
- Codema are in negotiations to supply energy to the Energy Bureau
- Recruitment is underway for an Assistant Environmental Awareness Officer

Join the 2022 Climate Conversation by filling out this online questionnaire

[gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - Minister Ryan launches Climate Conversation 2022 (www.gov.ie)

Attached:

- Update from the Heritage/Biodiversity Officer and
- Update Slides from the Environmental Awareness Officer

- Press Release inviting everyone to record their comments to the climate conversation questionnaire

The Mountains to the Sea Greenway Project, is a citizen initiative which proposes to interlink nine Wicklow towns and villages. The Project commits to interconnectivity, smart green economics, biodiversity and sustainability. Introduced by East Wicklow PPN Rep, Justin Ivory, with a short presentation of its aims and vision, the intention is that it will be included for discussion on the full agenda of the next meeting with a view to CABA SPC supporting its inclusion as part of the new LECP. Council staff are to check and see if the LECP process will still be open to such inputs in September before the decision on inclusion to agenda of next meeting.

..... **Next meeting of CABA SPC, September 22nd, 2022**.....