

The CABEEMRA SPC met on 11th July in Wicklow County Council Buildings (in the council chamber in fact.) The agenda was broad and Cllr Erika Doyle our Chairperson led the way.

Biodiversity Action Plan

We started with approval of Wicklow Co Co's Biodiversity Action Plan. Hannah O'Kelly Wicklow's Biodiversity Officer and her team have done a good job to produce a very well written plan with 50 actionable areas. It's an ambitious plan but also mindful of constraints in terms of resources, which are highlighted were needed. The SPC were happy to approve it. Now it goes to public consultation and then on to Council approval with hopes for it to be launched in September this year. The plan is a living document with actions already taking place and will be modified as need over the five year plan.

Litter Management Plan

The Litter Management Plan was presented by Jim Callary, Climate Action Officer. Following requests from this SPC, quarry truck waste such as gravel and dust will be included under the plan, also the use of DNA testing for dog fouling will be investigated further. The public consultation brought up concerns which have been included in the plan including about cigarette butts accumulating in certain areas (eg bus stops), mobile collections for hazardous waste, and the issue of disposal of green waste (green waste not officially classified as litter) but has been included in the plan. Cllr Peir Leonard suggested that the council look at recycling of doors and furniture to create a circular economy. The emptying of household waste into public bins also an issue. JC said CCTV will be used more for enforcement in black spots. The SPC asked for consistency in provision of dog bins across the county. This will be looked at in the plan. JC also supported the importance of the circular economy and says that the focus has been on textiles, but that can be expanded.

WCC Decarbonisation

A presentation was made by Declan Keogh, Regional Energy Manager for the Mid East Energy Unit (MEEU on behalf of the local authorities looks after counties Wicklow, Kildare, Meath to identify and implement energy efficiency and low-carbon projects). This was a very interesting presentation, with a lot of actions happening across the region. Some of the highlights are:

- We are on target for a 50% improvement in decarbonisation for 2030
- The Gap To Target (GTT) is 1.043 tonnes of carbon.
- 15% is left to achieve by 2030.
- Decarbonisation will be achieved via installing energy efficient projects such as better public lighting, looking at transport eg the fleet of the LAs, and focusing on 'Thermals' such as the LA swimming pools, county buildings and fires stations.
- Four leisure centres will be decarbonised in Wicklow over the next four years.
- District heating is being studied using all available sources eg Biomass etc. Data Centres were near urban areas. Looking at juxtaposition of agricultural greenhouses near to energy sources.
- Bray Fire station has been used as a case study with an energy upgrade from BER E1 to B1 by using double glazing, new heating systems and new doors

etc. This model is being rolled out across other fire stations. This one building energy upgrade contributed 5% to the 2030 targets.

- In Wicklow's Clermont Campus, biomass heating has contributed 3% to the decarbonisation targets.
- Wicklow County buildings for some time has had one of the largest solar covered car parks in the county. (I parked there and was glad of the shade provided by the panels on a very sunny day). The buildings have a new heat pump with gas back up, upgrade to radiators etc. Contributes 4% to decarbonisation.

An issue was highlighted re the 1927 'Private Wires' Act which is hampering the use of privately generated energy (like from those solar panels) across the public pathways. This is forbidden at the moment. So for example the energy from solar in the WCC buildings can't be sent to fuel the swimming pool which is across the road. After a public consultation last October, this Act is due a change.

Draft Waste Bye-Law Presentation

This presentation was given by Robert Kelly, WCC Executive Scientist in the Waste Management Unit. This presentation was the first in a process of changing the Bye- Laws for waste (last changed in 2018 and now outdated). This will include a newspaper notice with a 2 month window for submissions, and formal approval by WCC members.

The bye laws deal with the 'prior to collecting' element of waste management eg household food waste, use of three bins for each household, brown bins for food waste etc.

The issue of bins being left all over the place after bin collection was highlighted by Cllr Danny Alvey as problematic for disabled people. RK says this is not technically within remit of the bye laws but he will follow this up with the license provider for the waste collectors. A suggestion of communal bins for apartment developments was suggested by the SPC as opposed to each apartment getting three bins. RK is looking at this but new developments are generally better at this he says. Illegal waste operators are a challenge and are 'everywhere' but severe penalties are possible says RK.

LAWPRO Presentation

A presentation was given by Margaret Keegan, Regional Coordinator for LAWPRO (Local Authority Waters Programme) to the SPC, to highlight the work of the organisation. Their remit to 'protect, restore, and maintain water quality' across the country. Some of the highlights of the presentation were:

- 71% of Wicklow's waters are achieving excellent eco status as opposed to 52% nationwide. It is critical we protect this.
- 2% of our waters are not good at all including the Kings River Upper Liffery area and the Avonmore. Acidification is an issue and a PHD study is ongoing as to the causes. Emma Smith (West Wicklow Environmental Rep for the PPN) suggested citizen science and a possible linking up with West Wicklow Environmental Network for an event on the King's River.
- Biggest polluters are in order of magnitude
 - Agriculture

- Forestry
- Not known
- Urban Run off
- Households etc
- Action is required across all sectors.
- Wicklow has a good coverage of 'blue dot' waters where there is the best water quality - these need to be promoted to increase awareness
- In last 12 months there have been 4,500 farm inspections (increasing of 3k)
- The good news is 'that farmers want to do more than is needed' and that is why a european project (Farming for Water EIP) is expanding to fund additional farm measures to over 15,000 farmers to implement water friendly operations.
- Other projects are:
 - the Barrier Programme where barriers in rivers are removed to allow fish migration etc
 - Uisce Eireann to invest Eur 2.3bn in projects
- There is strong community engagement in Wicklow
- Funds of over Eur2m are available for medium to largescale projects
- A Water Action Plan is in development

Glossary:

LA - Local Authority eg the County Council

WCC - Wicklow County Council

CABEEMRA - Climate Action, Biodiversity, Energy, Marine, Recreation and the Arts.

SPC - Strategic Policy Committee

MEEU - Mid East Energy Unit

LAWPRO - Local Authority Waters Programme

EIP - European Innovation Partnership