

Notes from the Wicklow PPN Secretariat & Reps Meeting with the WCC Climate Action Team

Tuesday 26th May 2026

Background & Context

In March 2024 Wicklow PPN invited the recently appointed Climate Action Team to meet PPN members in An Tairseach Organic Farm for introductions and information on their plans.

The context of this meeting was to update the PPN on work undertaken since the introductory meeting.

Attendance :

Climate Action Team: Mark Costello, Hannah O' Kelly and Julie Sammiller

PPN: Tessa Stewart, Ashleigh Downey, Tammy Byrne, Emma Smith and Helen Howes

Apologies: Colm Mules, Mai Quaid, Patrick O'Driscoll, and Phyllis Farrell

Dr Hannah O'Kelly – Biodiversity Officer

- Most of the work centred around the development of the county's Biodiversity Action Plan (BDAP) which was adopted in December 2025 and launched in February 2026.
- Many of the actions in the BDAP have begun to be implemented already.
- The role is vast and the lack of human and financial resources available is a huge challenge.
- One of the main focuses of biodiversity work is ensuring that WCC complies with its legal responsibility to manage their land in a way that achieves favourable environmental status.
- Management plans for the coastal areas of Brittas Bay, Bray Head and Wicklow Head were highlighted with reports of small actions being undertaken. Magheramore beach was reported as being in poor ecological shape and no plan has been developed for it as yet. The removal of invasive species in Claremont was spoken about and 2 sites have been identified for inclusion in the neighbourwood scheme.
- The huge work being done by community groups was highly commended and the Biodiversity Officer supports this where possible. Highlighted projects included: citizen science projects run in collaboration with the libraries, planting over 3,000 trees in Rahene Park, the Wicklow Barn Owl Project (clipping & monitoring numbers), installation of over 1500 nesting boxes, woodland bat monitoring.
- Long-term impact collaborations highlighted, Wicklow Barrers Removal/Fish Pass in collaboration with the EWRT & LAWPRO (opening up 40,000 km of

biodiversity corridor), Sponge Works project, Re-farm projects and the Dark Skies Project.

Julie Sammiller – Community Climate Action Officer

- The first Community Climate Action Fund is closing with 19 grass roots community projects sharing €646,000
- Applications for the second round of funding closed in December 2025. Pobal now administers the fund on behalf of the Department. 28 Wicklow projects were put forward for funding.
- Some successful first round projects were showcased.
- Julie, along with Jim Callery, Climate Action Officer is currently working to develop a community garden network.
- It is not known if a 3rd round of Community Climate Action Funding will issue.
- Social Enterprises may be eligible to apply for any future funding depending on the structure & role of the organization along with the type of project for which the funding is sought.

Mark Costello – Climate Change Coordinator

Mark's Presentation accompanies these notes.

- The WCC Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 was referenced as underpinning the work of the Climate Action Team. The accomplishments of the actions are the Key Performance Indicators being worked towards.
- Some staff turnover was highlighted. The current Director of Services, Theresa O' Brien is to retire in June, Mark is leaving this role before the end of June
- Policies highlighted in green (in the presentation) have been progressed and/or implemented while policies highlighted in red need to be reviewed/need more work. Delays in review caused by lack of resources. It was highlighted that without further resources it will be very difficult to implement every policy action.
- WCC has sought funding to begin forming a park's department within the local authority and to hire an ecologist. Some policy reviews are being kept on hold while awaiting additional expertise.
- It is expected that the Climate action team will progress to permanent contracts soon.

Conclusion

Wicklow PPN expressed their gratitude to the Climate Action Team for their engagement with the organisation and its member groups. While the Climate Action Team expressed gratitude to Wicklow PPN for supporting their community reach.

Mark was wished well in his new posting.