



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Minutes of the Climate Action, Biodiversity and Heritage Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held online on Wednesday 9th April at 10:00 am

I LÁTHAIR:

Baill:

Cllr, Ivan Canning, Chairperson

Cllr. Martina Kinane

Cllr. Ollie Turner

Cllr. Donagh Killilea

Mr. Peter Butler

Oifigigh:

Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services, Planning

Mr Uisinn Finn, Director of Services, Physical Dev, Fire Emergency, Climate Change

Ms. Rosina Joyce, Biodiversity Officer, Planning

Ms. Tina Ryan, Climate Change Co-Ordinator, Climate Change

Ms. Denise Feeney, Administrative Officer, Climate Change

Ms. Helen Hallinan, Assistant Staff Officer, Environment

Ms. Anne Power, Senior Staff Officer, Planning

Apologies:

Ms. Marie Mannion

Ms. Hazel Morrison

Ms. Justine Delaney

Item No. 1 - Introductions and Confirmation of Minutes and Matters arising from the Climate Change, Biodiversity and Heritage Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 27th of November 2025

Ivan Canning welcomed everyone to the Climate Action, Biodiversity and Heritage Strategic Policy Committee meeting. The Minutes of the previous SPC meeting were confirmed without changes.

Item No. 2- Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 1st Annual Implementation Update

Ms Tina Ryan welcomed everyone to the meeting and presented an overview of recent Climate Action activities by Galway County Council. Ms Ryan advised that an Annual Report is currently being developed and will be presented at next SPC meeting, and that inputs will be received from the various departments. Ms Ryan outlined that Galway County Council are involved in a number of networks and projects of various scales to maximise on funding streams and support projects. Ms. Ryan gave a brief overview of the different projects.

Project Updates

- **De-carbonisation Zone:**
Aran Islands community support and solar projects.
- **Galway County Council Energy Use:**
Returns due in May; reductions noted but more work needed.
- **Buildings:**
Assessments on buildings in Tuam, Ballinasloe, and Westside Library.
Ballinasloe and Tuam Leisure Centres - Purchase power agreement requiring planning permission.
ISO 50001 Energy Management System accreditation expected by year-end and putting items in place to achieve that.
50% funding under SEAI's Pathfinder program funding for building upgrades facing cost and market availability issues.
- **Public Lighting:**
70% LED lighting achieved.

Goals and Projects

- **Goal 2: Energy & Built Environment:**
364 social housing units retrofitted to B2 standard properties since 2021 under National Retrofit Programme.
- **Goal 3: Transport:**
Active Travel updates expected at the next meeting.

- **Goal 7: Adaptation to Climate Risk** under Uisinn Finn's department
CFRAM Programme Tranche 1 2018 to 2027 projects in Ballinasloe and Clifden.
- **Goal 4: Community and Enterprise:**
Various community and enterprise projects ongoing.
Support from Cllr Kinane and Cathaoirleach acknowledged.

Additional Initiatives

- **Climate Action for Over 60s:**
Ms. Denise Feeney is working on this initiative.
- **Training Events:**
Successful training events with Planning and Housing departments.
Case study on housing retrofit developed and presented.

Item No. 3 - Community Climate Action Fund 2025 and DZ Fund Update

Ms Denise Feeney presented an overview on Community Climate Action fund 2025 which aims to support the development of low carbon communities with a total funding of €762,000. Key points included:

- **Applications:** 55 applications were received for 2024, totalling €2.7 million. 32 projects were awarded funding. The next round of funding is expected to open sometime after June 2025, with a possible extension to September. We expect the same amount of funding in the next round.
- **Funding Criteria:** Projects must:
 - Reduce emissions
 - Increase renewable energy production/use
 - Improve climate change resilience
 - Enhance biodiversity
 - Support the low carbon economy
- **Eligibility:**
 - Not-for-profit organizations within Galway County Council's operational area
 - Must be registered with a Public Participation Network (PPN) or similar collectives such as the Wheel, Tidy Towns and/or a community group with Articles of Association or a Constitution, which hold an AGM, and for which approved minutes are available.
 - Only one application per organization, for capital projects

Ineligible: Individuals, commercial entities, schools, and national organizations.

Theme 1: Community/Energy

- **Goal:** Reduce the climate impact of community buildings by using less energy, renewable energy, and avoiding heat loss.
- **Popular Applications:** Retrofitting community buildings, installing solar panels, upgrading community lighting to LEDs.
- **Energy Audits:** Essential for guiding retrofitting efforts and improving application scores.

Theme 2: Travel

- **Goal:** Reduce emissions related to travel.
- **Popular Applications:** Bicycle parking/racks, bicycle repair stations, community cargo bikes.
- **Strong Applications:** Good design of bicycle racks (base, shelter, quality, installation), three adequate quotes required and a clear delivery plan.

Theme 3: Food and Waste

- **Popular Projects:** Community gardens, community fridges, composting facilities, anaerobic digesters.
- **Strong Applications:** Demonstration of cross-community benefit, good design and delivery plan, three adequate quotes indicating good value for money.
- **Example:** St. Bridget's Garden successfully using an anaerobic digester.

These themes and projects are excellent ways to foster sustainability and community engagement

Theme 4: Shopping and Recycling

This theme focuses on enhancing recycling facilities and promoting initiatives to reduce, reuse, recycle, and upcycle. Popular projects include:

- **Water refill stations:** Encouraging the use of reusable bottles.
- **Segregated bins:** Facilitating proper waste separation.
- **Community repair hubs:** Providing spaces for repairing items instead of discarding them.
- **Swap shops:** Used in GAA clubs for exchanging sports gear like hurls, helmets, football boots, etc.

Theme 5: Local Climate & Environmental Action

This theme aims to foster local environmental initiatives. Popular projects include:

- Mini forests and dispersed orchards: Enhancing green spaces.
- Rainwater harvesting: Collecting and using rainwater.
- Pollinator projects: Creating wildflower meadows to support pollinators. Ms. Feeney collaborated with Biodiversity Officer Ms. Joyce to determine suitable plants for these projects.

Decarbonisation Zone

Galway County Council has set up a new fund for the 3 Aran Islands as the Decarbonisation Zone and have allocated €60,000 in funding, which is open to schools, businesses, and community groups.

Cllr. Kinane wished Cllr. Canning the best of luck as the new Chairperson. Cllr. Kinane also thanked and appreciated all the hard work from Tina Ryan, Denise Feeney. Cllr. Kinane noted that the Community Action Fund is welcome and knows there is huge interest in it but is concerned about the Community Action Fund's limited increase in funding, especially given rising infrastructure costs. Ms. Kinane acknowledged that the motivation from communities is high but raised concern that they will lose the interest if they do not receive the funding. She again thanked everyone for all the time and their hard work. Ms. Feeney replied saying that the funding will probably be the same amount this year as the previous year and advised emailing Ministers highlighting these issues. Ms. Kinane's proposed to seek additional funding for the Climate Action Fund at the next Plenary meeting and Cllr. Ollie Turner seconded it.

Ms. Ryan noted that additional funding applicable to Climate Action projects will be available under other funding schemes and PPN members will be notified as these funds open for applications.

Item No. 4 Biodiversity Office Update

Ms. Joyce provided a comprehensive update on the various biodiversity initiatives and projects for 2025. Here are some key points from the update:

1. **Successful Grant Applications:** Local Biodiversity Action Funds were secured from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.
2. **4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (2023-2030):** Projects for 2025 are categorised under 10 themes:
 - Alpine Newt Management
 - Mayfly Survey
 - The Hare's Corner
 - Invasive Species Survey and Treatment
 - Peatland Birds

- Survey of Corrib Islands
 - Circuitspaces
 - Artificial Lighting Workshops
 - Tree Management Plan
 - Working with Nature
3. **Main Projects for the Year:** The Mayfly Survey and The Hare's Corner are highlighted as major successes.
 4. **Additional Projects:** These include the Swift Survey for Southeast Galway, Tidy Towns Outreach, Biodiversity Week, and staff training.
 5. **Lighting Workshops:** Two workshops were held for local authority staff, focusing on optimizing lighting infrastructure. The workshops were well-received and may be expanded county-wide.
 6. **The Hare's Corner Engagement:** There were 303 applicants, with significant participation from private landowners, farmers, schools, and community groups.

Ms Joyce noted that it is great to see such active engagement and successful initiatives in biodiversity and environmental management. She also noted that Biodiversity Week is from 16th to 25th May 2025, and is going to be an exciting and impactful programme of community events including Aoife Munn Gardening Workshops, Bioblitz, Batwalks and Dawn Chorus. The launch of the Heritage and Biodiversity Plan 2024-2030 is a significant step forward. Ms. Joyce thanked Martina Creaven, Anne Power, Ita Gordon, Gina O'Shaughnessy and Shane Carroll for their help and support.

Cllr. Canning noted his concern about the decline in wildlife in recent years and stated that conservation efforts are crucial to maintaining biodiversity and protecting our natural habitats. The initiatives mentioned by Ms. Joyce, like installing nest boxes and using "Esker Boxes" (available free from libraries) for species identification, are great steps towards supporting and monitoring wildlife.

Ms. Joyce added that it's crucial to continue documenting and recording these trends to understand and address the challenges facing our wildlife. The threat of roadkill on the M6 is a serious issue that needs attention.

Item No. 5 Any Other Business

None

Meeting Concluded.

Next meeting scheduled: 12th June 2025