

Minutes of Meeting through teams of Climate Change & Biodiversity

Strategic Policy Committee held on 22nd October 2020

I Láthair:

Baill: Cllr. Alastair Mc Kinstry, Cathaoirleach
Cllr. Gabriel Cronnelly
Cllr. Evelyn Francis Parsons
Cllr. Martina Kinane
Mr. John Hynes
Mr. Henry Walsh
Ms. Janice Fuller
Mr. Conor O'Brien
Mr. Paul Hogan

Oifigigh: Ms. Eileen Ruane, Director of Services;
Mr. Mike Melody, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. David O'Loughlin, Assistant Engineer;
Ms. Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer
Mr Aidan Cunningham, A/Senior Staff Officer.
Ms. Sabina O Connell, A/Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies:

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of Climate Change & Biodiversity SPC meeting held on 30th July 2020

The Cathaoirleach asked if there were any correction or additions to be noted from the minutes of Climate Change & Biodiversity meeting of July 30th 2020. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Cllr McKinstry requested update on business actions from last meeting.

National heritage sites – Ms. Mannion confirmed that she has been in contact with Dr. Neil Lockard at NPWS who had in turn replied to her. She read out the contents of his reply. The scientific section of NPWS will gratefully accept maps, lists of sites etc and upon reading they will recommend if deemed appropriate & pass onto relevant section to progress.

Foras na Páistí - Cllr McKinstry confirmed some potential sites had been identified & proposed that a working group be set up to progress this

Covenant of Mayors – Allocation to be included in budget for 2021 towards this.

All Ireland Pollinator Plan – This has been agreed upon.

Hedgerows & Verges – guidelines for cutting – Ms. Fuller confirmed that a brief document has been produced in line with Teagasc best practices. This has been sent to GCCs Area Engineers and that a meeting with the Roads department was planned for next week. It is hoped that the document will be approved for agreeing with hedge cutting contractors.

Single use plastic - Cllr McKinstry confirmed that a letter had been sent to the department recommending the inclusion of wet wipes together with other single use plastics items , as restricted items in the legislation to be introduced in July 2021 and it is hoped that the recommendation will be adopted.

Blue Waterways – Ms. Quinn has been liaising with the CEED department of the council and it has been agreed that Cllr. Sheridan can progress this through that department.

2. Presentation and review, ESB E cars rollout in Galway

Cllr McKinstry confirmed that following on from the national meeting there were queries around ability of councils invest in chargers, where will chargers be located, what further involvement will be required of local authorities. The ESB had been contacted and Conor O'Brien & Paul Hogan from Customer Solutions at ESB gave a presentation to the group on this matter.

Partnership Programme was rolled out in Ireland in 2010 to 2015 – Now gone into N.I. also

- Countries being fined for CO2 emissions
- Poor air quality
- ESB brought their plan to Government Climate Action Fund & received €10million to which ESB have added a further €10million
- Battery prices dropping hugely to make buying more attractive
- Half price toll charges
- High spec cars can travel 500kms without need to be recharged
- SEI grants - €600 grant for home chargers - €10,000 grant to install in a particular area
- It is hoped that 80 – 90% of cars will be charged at home
- Hotels can avail of grants for their car park installation
- Volkswagen investing billions into their cars
- 24,000 vehicles in Ireland presently
- Customer call centre in Cork
- As number of E cars grow the ESB will meet demand – newer cars are charging faster – introducing charger queuing system – penalise cars that stay longer than 45 minutes
- Budget – E cars no VRT up to €50,000.
- ESB have confidence in network & are dedicated to making it more visible – 159 old chargers replaced to speed up charging time. Points in Clifden & Galway City in upcoming plan for upgrade to faster chargers.
- Setting up charging Hubs where 3 cars can charge at same time – 1 of these at Galway Plaza.
- Plans for 8 vehicle hubs – 1 in Kildare coming soon
- Programme to run until 2023 to develop the sites & locations needed

Mr. Hogan added that a challenging aspect for the ESB will be its ability to influence planning where necessary.

Cllr. McKinstry thanked Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Hogan for the in-depth presentation presented He also stated that;

Minutes of Meeting through teams of Climate Change & Biodiversity SPC held on 22nd October 2020

- There were rural Ireland concerns – Concerns that a lack of charging points in tourist areas in rural Ireland would impact of tourists to areas.
- Heavier duty chargepoints – any issues surrounding these that the group needed to be made aware of such as the update of points in Clifden.

Cllr. Cronnelly informed the meeting that VRT rates / emission changes had not as yet been notified to car dealerships & wondered as to when this may be happening.

An answer to this could not be provided at this meeting

Cllr. Kinane requested that copies of the slides shown be sent to all members of the team meeting. She asked for clarification on

- Have Corporate Solutions liaised with the motor industry with regards to having a package when selling E cars that would include installation of a home charger
- Grant information for businesses to be more publicised to raise awareness of availability of same

Mr. O'Brien informed the meeting that the installation grants come from SEAI not Corporate Solutions but that they happy to work with agencies / businesses to promote installation of charging points.

It is up to SEAI to put an information package together re grant availability / application.

With regards to tourism concerns Customer Solutions are also working with NPWS and some national parks have chargers already installed.

Regarding car dealerships – everyone needs to get on board – some battery suppliers have partnered with motor industries to.

Clifden upgrade should be a straightforward process.

Cllr. Kinnane welcomed the information given.

Mr. Hogan told meeting that challenges facing Corporate Solutions are trying to get the local authorities on board in order to educate them on chargepoints in local towns, housing estates. At present, there is a stagnation in uptake of the grants. SEAI grants only open to local authorities. Link to today's presentation will be sent out.

Ms. Ruane thanked Mr O'Brien and Mr. Hogan for their time today & presentation presented. She noted the following was needed;

- Consultation / liaising with the Forward Planning Department of the Council re The County Development plan review required.
- More information needed on shared charging points at apartment blocks.
- Consultation / input from Fáilte Ireland necessary
- Greater clarity on the roles of every agency necessary
- More discussion / clarity required on if a local authority obtains a grant from SEAI for e.g. housing estate charging point, who actually owns the charger & who will be responsible for maintenance of same.

Mr. Hogan stated that they are currently in communication with Galway City Council.

Cllr. McKinstry asked if Corporate solutions could send team members a map of their planned current sites.

Minutes of Meeting through teams of Climate Change & Biodiversity SPC held on 22nd October 2020

Mr. O'Brien said that they can provide a list, but that this is a three / four-year plan. The largest hub sites will charge 8 cars equivalent supplying to around 100 houses & the average points equivalent to supplying three or four houses

There is a lot of equipment involved in installing and the larger points will be on motorway service stations.

3. Energy Master Plan for Galway County Council

This was raised by Public Partnership. It is run by SEAI – two councils have signed up already. Cllr. McKinstry proposes that GCC support them.

Ms. Ruane told meeting that this is to be overseen by an energy bureau who will work with CARO Office in Mayo, SEAI & CCMA.

Governance will be through CARO - Bureau will accelerate progress

A dedicated energy officer will be based in each local authority where we will be committed to a plan.

SEAI will fund 50% & LA will fund the balance.

There will be a financial requirement in budget for 2021 - €50,000 for year one & thought to be €47,000 in year 2.

Mr. Melody told meeting GCC have been in contact with SEAI.

They have identified that applications must be from a charity or a company.

SEAI haven't a financial balance to fund these applications so local authority will be lead applicant.

Funding arrangements will be by means of a memorandum of understanding.

GCC will forward the monies and make a claim to SEAI for re-imburement.

There will be flexibility in the memorandum of understanding re the level of funding to be granted.

The contacts in GCC for this are Eileen Ruane, Mike Melody & David O'Loughlin.

Cllr. McKinstry enquired as to the existence of an energy agency some years prior to this & what was plan for register of opportunities.

Ms. Ruane confirmed that there had been in Galway but not for some time now. The new Energy Bureau going forward will be a regional office with a dedicated energy performance officer in individual LAs for projects and funding.

The timescale for recruitment will be 2021 & will be done through CARO.

A register of opportunities will form part of the brief for the newly appointed officer.

4. Review Climate Action Plan 2019 – 2020 – Actions relevant to Galway

Ms. Ruane informed the meeting that at the inaugural SPC meeting in May a copy of the Action plan was distributed to members.

A list of elements relevant to Galway have been drawn up

Responses may be independent or collaborate

CARO office working on it.

Mr. Melody & Mr. O'Loughlin are working on reporting

Review is in progress & there will be an update for next SPC meeting.

5. Invasive Species Decision Support Tool

A copy of tool had been distributed to members before this meeting.

Ms. Mannion explained that the purpose of it is to give insight as efficiently as possible how to deal with areas with invasive species

Ms. Fuller explained that the idea is to signpost people to the most relevant information speedily.

Links are included to bring one to whatever scenario they need advice on

It is easy to update – best practice changes very easy to add in

It is an interactive document.

It can be used as model for other guidance documents in the future

Ms. Mannion informed the group that Prof Joe Caffrey a world-recognised expert on **invasive species** and a director with INVAS Biosecurity, an Irish company that specialises in the control and maintenance of **invasive species** on land and water had produced little coloured cards “guide to eradication of evasive species”.

GCC obtained some additional NDBP funding and they have purchased 300 of these guides. These have been distributed to the roads staff and the heritage officer hopes to work with Mary McGann in Tidy Towns area to get these for local communities also.

Ms. Ruane thanked Ms. Mannion. She has seen the cards, finds them very engaging for all ages and that the idea is simple but very effective.

Cllr. Kinnane agreed that it was a very good idea to engage with local tidy town communities in distributing these cards. She enquired if they covered poison mushrooms which they don't. Cllr Kinnane asked that all SPC members get these guides – this was agreed upon and would be distributed to the members.

Cllr. Parsons welcomed the distribution of these to tidy town communities as best practices vital in any attempt to eradicate these plants.

The council have a dedicated strategy in the county for the mapping and reporting of sites containing invasive species.

6. Working Near Water

Ms. Mannion stated that many community groups are doing very good work locally on projects but without using best practices complaints arise from other sectors of the community re water issues. The aim here is to educate the local communities on best practices before any work is undertaken close to water courses.

Ms. Fuller explained that pollution issues arise may arise inadvertently through lack of knowledge.

The aim of the guidance document is to promote protection of water quality. Water supports bio-diversity, flood plains & natural amenity development.

Through lack of knowledge when carrying out works in / close to waterways fish stocks can be killed, local flooding can arise, invasive species can take over areas, and there can be a loss of bio-diversity & overall a reduction in water quality.

The aim is to get groups / individuals to consult with local council / NPWS / Fisheries board before any works undertaken. The guidance document was promoted by GCC during Bio-diversity & Heritage week to give workers guidance for best approach to be taken & top tips.

- Plan required
- Environmental assessment carried out
- Permission from other agencies obtained

A buffer zone of 5 metres should be maintained whilst carrying out works.

Minutes of Meeting through teams of Climate Change & Biodiversity SPC held on 22nd October 2020
Ms. Fuller met with the Water quality officer prior to this meeting for final approval of document.

7. All Ireland Pollinator Plan

Ms. Mannion confirmed that the plan has been adopted by GCC & has been signed off by CEO Kevin Kelly & Cathaoirleach James Charity.

The council are in process of compiling a report on this.

Ms. Mannion thanked Ms. Ruane for presenting the plan to the full council and acknowledged the work of Ms Fuller & Ms. Rosina Joyce for their work on the plan

Ms. Mannion informed meeting that Ms. Fuller will be taking up a new post with Collite. She acknowledged the level of knowledge that the council have availed of through Janice over the past few years & thanked her for the huge amount of commitment she has given and work she has done for the council, which will leave a long lasting legacy.

Ms Ruane, Cllr McKinstry & Cllr Kinnane seconded this – thanking Janice for her clarity in communication & ability to deliver. She was wished well in her new position.

8. A.O.B.

Cllr Kinnane wants the possibility of having a dedicated coastal erosion officer investigated by GCC. This person would be responsible for carrying out investigations and putting necessary cases to OPW to draw necessary funding down for works to be carried out.

Cllr Kinnane believes that lowlands have a dedicated plan with a person appointed to oversee this & she believes now is the time to have similar for coastal erosion. A feasibility study is required she believes and requests SPC group to recommend same.

Ms. Ruane confirmed that she has spoken to Jim Cullen DOS Infrastructure and Operations. There is no capacity for funding such an officer at present. She enquired of Cllr Kinnane if she is looking for a dedicated officer funded by OPW or whether it is an officer whereby the OPW will fund the council to complete the studies required and complete necessary paperwork. Cllr Kinnane thought the person dealing with lowlands may have being funded elsewhere.

Ms. Ruane confirmed that she will draft request from SPC in line with Cllr Kinnane's request to see if matter can be progressed.

Cllr Cronnelly informed meeting that Rinvilla is the only working Pier in Galway and that he thinks there may be flag grants available.

Ms. Ruane confirmed that she will discuss with Jim Cullen DOS Infrastructure and Operations

Climate changes resources – business case

Ms. Ruane stated that business case has been finalised and has been submitted to the CCMA whom it is expected will endorse same and submit to the Department.

In summary four new staff positions will be created alongside the dedicated energy officer discussed earlier in today's meeting.

Next meeting set for December 10th 2020 at 10am.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CHRUINNIU ANSIN


CATHAOIRLEACH ALASTAIR MC KINSTRY

