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**Climate Action**

**Strategic Policy Committee**

Minutes of Field Trip held on the

 14th September 2022 at 10:00am

**Councillors Present:** Bill Clear (Chair), Peter Hamilton

**Sectoral Interests:** Tom Malone

**Officials Present:** Ciara O’Flynn

**Also Present:** Sophia Couchman Master student MU

**Apologies:** Joe Boland,Ciara Galvin, Fiona McLoughlin Healy, Naoise O’Cearuil, Kevin Duffy, Sinead Ronan, Fintan Brett, Paula O’Rourke.

1. **Minutes**

Not applicable.

1. **Matters Arising**

No matters arising.

1. **Talk & Walk**

A bus was provided by Local Link to bring the participants on a field trip to Teagasc, Ashtown Research Centre, Dublin 15.

The educational trip gave an overview of research topics in the advancement of climate action in the agriculture/horticultural sphere.

The trip consisted of a ‘talk & walk’ tour of the research centre’s areas of experimental interest facilitated by researcher and ornamental adviser Donall Flanaghan and research officer Eoghan Corbett of Teagasc.

Some of the research being undertaken onsite included:

* Potential alternatives to peat for horticultural purposes recently commenced.  Initial options being trialled include Biochar, Wood Fibre, Coconut Coir mixed with various growing mediums to promote healthy plant production. Other potential growing medium mixes will be researched as the work advances.
* Automation of mushroom picking using a robotic arm to tackle reducing work force availability
* Ornamental tree species diversification in light of climate change, emerging threats from pests & diseases and changing market forces. Trials are in conjunction with European partners
* Ornamental shrub plant production trials in light of climate change, emerging threats from pests & diseases
* Monitoring of insect species, population size and other metrics using aerial tower collection. It is hoped this work will assist in the detection, number and populations of new pests arriving in the country while the industries concerned try to prevent potential pest immigration essential for Ireland’s plant protection zone status.
* Soft fruit production trialling varieties best suited to market requirements and climate conditions

Over lunch the attendees enjoyed a further chat with the researchers in Teagasc canteen before returning to Aras Chill Dara.

Teagasc were thanked for their hospitality, time, and expertise.