



# KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

## CLIMATE ACTION

### STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE 06<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2023**

**10AM COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**PRESENT**

Councillors: Cllr. Bill Clear (Chair), Cllr. Peter Hamilton, Cllr. Ciara Galvin, Cllr. Fintan Brett

Sectoral Interests: Tom Malone (Agricultural Representative), Nathan Flaherty (PPN)

Officials: Marian Higgins, Director of Services  
Paula O'Rourke, Climate Action Office Coordinator  
Victoria Kavanagh, Community Climate Action Officer

Speakers: Fergus Sharkey (SEAI)  
Meabh Boylan (Biodiversity Officer)  
Paula O'Rourke (Climate Action Coordinator)

Apologies: Cllr. Naoise Ó Cearúil, Sinead Ronan, Louise Rawlins Traynor

**AGENDA ITEM 1: TO DECLARE ANY (A) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST OR (B) PECUNIARY OR BENEFICIAL INTERESTS UNDER SECTION 177 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001, AS AMENDED.**

No conflicts registered.

**AGENDA ITEM 2: TO NOTE THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON 13TH FEBRUARY 2023**

Minutes of meeting of the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were noted by all members present.

**AGENDA ITEM 3: TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

No matters arising.

**AGENDA ITEM 4: TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION FROM FERGUS SHARKEY, HEAD OF BUSINESS SUPPORTS AND TRANSPORT, SEAI (SEAI SUPPORTS FOR BUSINESS LOW CARBON TRANSITION)**

- Fergus Sharkey gave a presentation to the committee titled 'SEAI supports for business low carbon transition'.
- SEAI has had huge growth and continues to grow. Budget of €600 million in 2023.

- Provision of 3500 – 5000 business grants, EV & charging points and thousands of residential retrofit grants throughout 2023 and beyond.
- Their focusing on commercial and industry sector decarbonisation – heat is a big challenge in both.
- Toolbox for 2030 – energy efficiency a very important workhorse of reducing emissions.
- Businesses at risk of future viability if not addressing decarbonising.
- Business decarbonisation 3 steps: Understand – Assess – Invest.
- €2000 voucher available for energy audit to businesses.
- Grants have been given to 3600+ businesses and €40million+ given in capital support.
- Looking at utilising district heat from 2024.
- Key message – increasing support.
- Two Case Studies of businesses that have invested in their energy efficiency and future:
  - Ahaseragh distillery, Co. Galway
  - Raddison Blu Letterkenny - heating costs cut by 70% 2022.

**Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:**

Cllr. Bill Clear

- Is there a biomass plant or anaerobic digester plant in Co. Kildare?
- Kildare not picked as part of the pilot schools programme, how were they picked?
- What supports are available to small medium enterprises such as local pharmacies, pubs etc.
- Question on motion detector lights & grants to give businesses new LED motion lights.
- Could SEAI use the Raddison Blu Letterkenny as an example and hold conferences there to show other businesses what could be done?

Tom Malone

- On anaerobic digestors in Co. Kildare – there is one in Nurney, further buy in is needed from agriculture. There is also an adequate capacity of product to supply AD's nationally.
- AD needs price certainty
- Nitrates – thinking positive – action required.

Paula O'Rourke

- Q on trading systems, ETS site budget of emissions.

Cllr. Ciara Galvin

- Observation that a top-down approach rather than bottom-up approach is needed.
- Ideas institute in SIPTU recommendation to speak to LEO for SME's
- Employee driven innovation in terms of efficiency – can this be applied to energy efficiency?
- Suggested there is a crossover between business owners and homeowners and energy efficiency in both will have crossover.

Cllr. Peter Hamilton

- How do we get beyond incremental change?
- How can colleges and schools avail of funding support?

- Noted that the cement industry is 3 times the size of the airline industry in terms of emissions with approximately 3 million tonnes of emissions.

#### Marian Higgins

- Thanked Fergus for his presentation– stated it was a very interesting topic.
- Commented that KCC has had a positive experience with AD plant in Kildare.
- Spoke about some climate deniers in LACAP public consultation process and commented on social context and climate literacy as important elements to remember when engaging with people.
- Education SEAI positive experiences.
- Discussed Kildare swimming pools & Aras – high energy buildings operated by KCC.
- Industry supply chain - price critical.

#### Cllr Fintan Brett

- In terms of AD vs Biomass, there is planning in Ireland for AD's.
- US Army stopped research on electric power now hydrogen research interesting to see what they are focusing on.
- ESB & OPW - why will they not allow farmers to sell back to grid? Discussion on TAMS grant – state aid rules. Grant for TAMS and GEBR protocol.

#### Replies to questions posed.

- The main difference between biomass and anaerobic digestion is the fuel source biomass wood chip / AD Agri waste.
- 3 AD's in Ireland, biomass burned on site for heat and/or electricity.
- Biomethane strategy to be published by end of year.
- Spoke about the social acceptance of AD facilities, to deliver this ideally farms have small AD, large plans require a more centralised network.
- Biomass – timber waste. This is a large waste resource we are underutilising.
- Agri is divisive, AD has huge role to play.
- Funding TBD.
- Levy on all gas bills – costs TBD.
- Cap & Trade, budget of emissions €1million per year for compliance
- During energy audit they do engage with employees & bring people along
- Agreed with crossover. Change process – open to speaking to ideas institute. Behavioural change key. On the industry side the ISO 500001 is part of it. Legally mandated from 2025. How is it being communicated? Ownership role agency, constructive dialogue.
- Instrumentalisation – previous 2 years huge turnaround in seriousness of issue. To meet 2030 targets. Cost 4 billion to save X tonnes – more cost effective when compared to cost and savings in residential for example.
- School – public sector funding, pathfinder funding generally doubles. Public investment needed.
- Cement – Technology is limited in what we can do in this area.
- 6 leavers that can be used to alter emission outputs in cement industry.
- Green public procurement (suite of recommendations, published in 2024)
- Building regulations, BER cert embodied carbon, mandated thresholds
- Other options – using waste, using renewable energy.
- Schools programme - €50 million budget allocated without costing analysis.
- Q on lighting distributed to SME's – not a one size fits all approach cost & complexity to be considered
- Carrot and stick approach – we have to incentivise.

- Future risks locked into fossil fuels.
- Everyone has a legal right to be paid for export. No export capacity in Kildare. Investment in grid required.
- Businesses don't have time to go to Letterkenny, we go to them.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 5: TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION FROM MEABH BOYLAN KCC BIODIVERSITY OFFICER**

- Meabh gave a brief introduction about her previous experience and background. Her presentation included the following:
  - Biodiversity loss
  - Consists of different elements: habitat loss (degradation, destruction, disturbance)
  - Pollution, invasive species, disease
  - Systemic issues (under resourced)
  - Legislation and reinforcement
  - Lack of education, understanding and awareness
  - Biological impacts of climate change
    - Mismatch – phenology.
    - Timing of season mismatch means extended growing seasons, new species, extensions.
    - Extreme weather
    - Invasive & pests
    - Double whammy: peatlands, beef & rainforests
  - Solutions
  - Trees, hedgerows, peatlands (locally grown)
  - KCC's strengths
  - Feighcullen – woodland planting space just for biodiversity to thrive.
  - 23 local biodiversity action groups
  - Educations:
    - IPCC – Irish peatland conservation council
    - Biodiversity action plans

#### **Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:**

##### Cllr. Bill Clear

- Planning applications in relation to biodiversity loss, could we look at planning and development management?
- There is a potential site at Jigginstown Castle that could be used to boost biodiversity.

##### Tom Malone

- Commented that there are changes happening in the beef industry. Europe encouraging protein crops to counter produce the amount of beef being produced.
- 6 million tonnes or hard feeds are required for cattle industry.

##### Nathan Flaherty

- Commented that volunteers are fatigued with biodiversity plans and conflicting information.
- Why isn't more being done around biodiversity.
- Why is there a reliance on voluntary groups to solve these issues.

### Peter Hamilton

- Discussed Peatlands National Park Group. Bog recovery, carbon recovery.
- Queried planning – and stated we are losing too many hedgerows.
- Could hedgerow restoration training be introduced?

### Cllr. Ciara Galvin

- Commented on example of Derrybeg hedgerow restoration project funded by KCC's Climate Innovation Fund.
- Stated the LPT Climate Innovation Fund could contribute to these projects and create positive biodiversity outcomes.
- Woodland Trust in the UK has a map of trees and something similar could be produced in Ireland.
- Suggestion of a tree of the year competition for public buy in and awareness.

### Paula O'Rourke

- Replied to Cllr. Galvin that there is a book on significant trees but unfortunately not a lot of ancient trees in Ireland.
- Advised Climate Innovation Fund plan in place for 2024 applications – links with the Local Enterprise Office and Maynooth University important. MU for innovation piece.

### Replies to questions posed.

- Re: planning. Contractual obligation means biodiversity officer can't look at planning as part of the role as it would take over role.
- Things are changing – hedgerows bill launched.
- Encouraged starting local nurseries.

## **AGENDA ITEM 6: TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM PAULA O'ROURKE (CLIMATE ACTION CO-ORDINATOR) ON THE DRAFT CLIMATE ACTION PLAN AND MAYNOOTH DZ.**

- Current policy and legislation requires Climate Action Plan must be adopted by 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023
- The plan has been done and will be brought to full council on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 to be adopted.
- Once it is adopted it will be up to KCC and relevant stakeholders to implement plan
- Broad stakeholder engagement carried out during consultation process.
- Shown current climate impact assessment vs. future climate impact assessment.
- Viewing of rare – common – very common weather events and how they will change.
- To mitigate emissions – residential, transport and commercial sectors have largest emissions.
- Showed vision & mission statements.
- 5 thematic areas (framework for actions).
- Looking at everything through climate lense.
- Maynooth DZ objectives – vision and mission statements shown.
- Similarly, residential, transport and commercial top 3 emissions causes.
- Public consultation 35 responses – reviewed responses and included in actions accordingly.
- Next steps:
  - Lead out.
  - Communicate – language important.
  - Implement

- Monitor and report.
- In 2023, 95% of actions were completed or started.

**Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:**

Cllr. Bill Clear

- Thanked Paula and Climate Action office for their work.
- Suggested an invitation to full council for next SPC meeting for overview and update to be given on LA CAP. Give all Councillors an opportunity to attend next SPC in observation capacity.

Marian Higgins

- Replied to Cllr. Clear's suggestion of inviting next SPC that is was good opportunity.
- Commented very lucky in Kildare with enthusiastic, passionate people behind this.
- Stated that for some actions difficult decisions need to be made in the future re: climate change and this will require support on all sides.

Replies to questions posed.

- Paula advised the Climate Action office will invite full council to next SPC to give overview and update to all.
- Paula thanked the climate action office for their work.

**AGENDA ITEM 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was noted.

**AGENDA ITEM 8: TO NOTE DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 12:10 p.m.