



KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL
CLIMATE ACTION
STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE 10TH MAY 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) Fiona Doolan (Teagasc)

Officials: Paula O'Rourke, Climate Action Coordinator
Edel Donnelly, Assistant Staff Officer

Speakers: Margaret Farrell (Teagasc, Signpost Advisory Programme)
Meabh O'Hagan (Teagasc, Signpost Advisory Programme)
Paula O'Rourke (Climate Action Coordinator)

Apologies: Sinead Rowan, Marian Higgins

AGENDA ITEM 1: TO NOTE THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON 08TH FEBRUARY 2023

Minutes of meeting of the 08th February 2023 were adopted by all members present.

AGENDA ITEM 2: TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No matters arising.

AGENDA ITEM 3: TO ADOPT THE CLIMATE ACTION SPC WORKPLAN 2023

The Climate Action SPC workplan was adopted by all members present.

AGENDA ITEM 4: PRESENTATION FROM MARGARET FARRELL CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISOR (SIGNPOST ADVISORY PROGRAMME). THE SIGNPOST PROGRAMME PURPOSE IS TO SUPPORT CLIMATE ACTION BY IRISH FARMERS. ITS MAIN GOALS ARE TO REDUCE GASEOUS EMISSIONS FROM IRISH AGRICULTURE, WHILE CREATING MORE PROFITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE FARMING ENTERPRISES.

Agricultural target of 25% reduction of greenhouse gases by 2030 on 2018 baseline figures (which actually peaked that year).

Enteric fermentation (61.3%), Agricultural Soils (21.4%) and Manure Management (11.4%) largest source of GHG emissions in 2021.

Signpost Advisory Programme

- New free advisory service available to all farmers (don't have to be a Teagasc customer).
- Examines where farms are now and offers/advises various actions that will reduce GHG emissions.
- All farms differ, therefore tailored plan for each farm (Individual Farm Sustainability Plan).
- 3 year plan, aim to have 50,000 farms signed up by 2030 (target of 500 Teagasc farmers by end of 2023 as established relationship).

Actions

- Know My Number – Make My Plan- allow farmers see and understand their carbon emissions and sequestration profile and act on it.
- Promote and support soil sampling – pH of the soil, P, N and K levels examined to maximize amount of fertiliser use.
- Lime – correct pH of soil to improve availability of plant nutrients.
- Encourage the planting of clover which fixes atmospheric nitrogen reducing the need for chemical nitrogen which increases the nitrogen use efficiency (NUE) on farms.
- Protected Urea – lower nitrous oxide emissions and lower level of nitrate leaching than CAN.
- Best practice i.e., slurry tankers LESS system keeps emissions lower to ground.

Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Tom Malone

- A reduction in emissions will follow suit however what are the costs involved?
- The fine print is very important and also the Lime & Agri-environment Scheme a great scheme however too many barriers such as the amount of paperwork.
- Focus needed on technology that is proven and multi species swards should be supported.

Cllr. Ciara Galvin

- Cllr Galvin queried how farmers get involved and has there been much uptake and if so, what has the feedback been and if there is a list of the various supports offered to farmers.
- Pointed out that very little discussion/reference to biodiversity.

Cllr. Peter Hamilton

- Pointed out the sense of urgency on all sides and that Teagasc could learn from SEAI and not impose barriers and reduce paperwork needed for such schemes.
- Questioned if the scheme was voluntary and the cost of lime spreading.
- Mixed swards very health for animals, more field with wide verge for biodiversity.

Cllr. Bill Clear

- Concerns regarding extra paperwork for farmers, advised to keep paperwork to a minimum.
- Queried farm building and if there will be a rating system eventually.
- Pointed out that emissions from dairy farms very efficient system.

Replies to questions posed.

- Only starting expression of interest in scheme at present, target of 500 farmers signed up by end 2023, Teagasc clients first.
- In relation to biodiversity, the Signpost Programme is focused on emissions reductions however the knock-on effect will be improved water quality and increase biodiversity (a holistic unit).
- Lime spreading cost very low in relation to chemical fertiliser and for every €1 spent on lime spreading €7 back in produce.
- Multi species swards high seed costs and longevity of seeds not great so extra ploughing not ideal, however animals love this feed.
- No obligation to sign up, however there should not be a problem with uptake.

AGENDA ITEM 5: PRESENTATION FROM PAULA O’ROURKE (CLIMATE ACTION COORDINATOR) ON THE CLIMATE ACTION PLAN AND MAYNOOTH DZ.

Update on the Climate Action SPC Work Programme

- Climate Action needs to be discussed and explored across all SPC’s not just the Climate Action SPC, this needs to be a collaborative process.
- CA SPC Workplan has been adopted by CPG
- CAP & DZ very large remittance, community engagement 18th June ‘Picnic in the Park’ informal consultation, community engagement and buy in of vital importance.
- Active Travel Scheme – various modes of active travel, cycle lanes, local link etc.
- EV support and charging points need to increase, new estate’s structure and new road.
- Green Business – work closely with LEO in relation to programmes they are running.
- Planning department very important and in particular tree planting in newer developments and their function in creating a microclimate.
- Maximizing hedgerows, including edible hedgerows instead of walls.
- Retrofitting – Upgrade all social housing, easier stock already completed, less efficient stock to be tackled next.
- SMART Actions – everything that we do/propose will need to be measurable KPI’s.
- Research and in particular collaboration with Maynooth University is very important.
- Alternative maintenance guide – report published in a month or two.

Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Cllr. Bill Clear

- Is the plan to make all council buildings carbon neutral?

Cllr. Peter Hamilton

- Commented on the positive news of the new Climate Action staff coming on board.
- Positive news on first area of rewilding.
- New civic amenities site?

Cllr. Fintan Brett

- Pointed out that climate change is affecting all SPC’s and suggested a visit to the Planning SPC.
- In relation to biodiversity are we planting a wildflower mix? Very little subsoil so when plant, less grass growth and more meadow of wildflowers.

Cllr. Ciara Galvin

- Questioned green open spaces and why not more wildflower meadows for pollinators.
- Notices trees around protected structures but the trees are not protected. Ryevale House in Leixlip massive tree felling, the older trees with building can they be protected?

Replies to questions posed.

- Indirectly all buildings will have to be carbon neutral however this may not be achievable with older stock.
- Wildflower mix currently being examined, however have to leave green areas for children to play.
- Tree protection orders in place (2-3) perhaps more can be put in place via Planning Department.

Update on the LACAP and DZ

- Timeframe 12 months, in reality 10 months (since process started) as plan to have the draft CAP in August and final plan in November so as to be adopted in December 2023.
- Importance of public consultation and understanding the public's visions from an early stage.
- Maynooth DZ test bed, solution driven, chosen due to backing of 27 community groups, MU, train, dart + west, greenway – ideal location.
- Test bed for ideas which can be adapted into other areas if successful.
- July - finalise DZ chapter to inform the Local Area Plan for Maynooth due to be reviewed in August.
- Various funding streams to help with cost such as RDF, Creative Ireland and Community Climate Action Fund, no direct funding.
- EnergyElephant contracted to examine energy usage and where improvements can be made, also examine obtaining ISO5001 certification.

AGENDA ITEM 6: OPEN DISCUSSION ON POTENTIAL TOPICS THE COMMITTEE WISH TO PURSUE IN 2023

Councillor Bill Clear suggested a visit to a pilot farm already registered under the Signpost Advisory Programme.

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, 13th September 2023.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 11.40 a.m.