

Linkage Group Meeting 09 June 2021

In attendance: Jennifer Whitty, Ali Sheridan, Judith Browne, Ann Behan, Mary Jennings, Thelma Stronge, Cliona Kelliher, Evonne Boland, Emer Conway, Fionnuala Corcoran, Edel Keane, Ronan o Reilly, Stephanie Alves, Liz Denieffe

Apologies: Bob Quinn, Liz Cullen, Sean Darcy, Gerry Dornan

Minutes

Welcome and Introductions (Jennifer Whitty)

Jennifer welcomed everyone and we heard from our new members

1. Update from May's Climate Action SPC Meeting (Ali/Jude)

Agenda Item brought to the SPC by the Linkage Group:

“To note submission made to KCC County Development Plan from the Climate Action Linkage Group”
(Ali Sheridan)

Update:

The Planning Dept have received the document and are working through it

The Councillor's Development Plan Review begins next week and Cllr Hamilton suggested all Cllrs read the submission prior to this process beginning

Paula congratulated the group on the quality of the submission

Ali highlighted the collective effort of the linkage group to pull together the submission

Cllr Brett raised the issue of the need to better engage wider parts of the community to build more support for climate and biodiversity action measures.

Conclusion

All SPC members have been made aware of and asked to become familiar with the comprehensive linkage group CDP submission

Next steps

Get clarity on the CDP review timeline - when the Chief Exec will be issuing his report on the pre draft consul and when the elected members will give their direction into the prep of the Draft CDP. Public Consultation on the draft is earmarked for December 2021.

Questions brought to the SPC by the Linkage Group:

- a) Glyphosate: Can an update on the work to remove glyphosate be provided to the SPC. What is the current status of the pilots and is there an anticipated date for a countywide ban? (Judith Browne) [Paula O'Rourke, Climate Action Officer]
- b) Hedgerows: Can an update be provided to the SPC on ongoing work to ensure hedgerows are not cut after March 1st and what practices are in place to monitor hedge cutting activity and increase awareness of the biodiversity values of hedgerows. (Judith Browne) [Paula O'Rourke, Climate Action Officer]

Update:

Judith presented images of weedkiller use and hedgerow cutting that members of the PPN had queried

Highlighted need to raise awareness of the need for training and licenses

Highlighted the need to educate Residents Association, community groups etc

Suggested that a glyphosate free approach should form part of the 10 Biodiversity Plans being rolled out across Kildare

Outlined that the PPN want to see a county wide glyphosate plan

Requested that KCC staff and contractors are asked not to spray and to ensure awareness of risks

Queried:

- o Can grants be linked to glyphosate ban?
- o Can KCC support local, organic food through procurement?
- o Can KCC influence National Roads Authority, clarify law on road verges, watercourses?
- o Can KCC change hedge cutting policy to better support hedgerows?

Response from Parks (Paula O' Rourke)

Parks Department are not spraying but this is not the case for the rest of the Council's Departments

Paula hopeful that other departments will follow the lead of Parks

Grants currently do have an environmental weighting

KCC does not have influence over NRA spraying

Verges – if it is a household or farm verge, KCC cannot control spraying

Buffer zones around drains depends on the chemical being used

Public awareness – Inland waterways have ran a local campaign

Hedgerows – some farmers need to cut hedges to create airflow to crops

NPWS oversee timelines of hedgecutting

Parks are currently working on guidelines for developers to protect biodiversity of note

Council aim to replace trees that are cut down, but this is not always done

Conclusion:

Overall it is disappointing that currently only Parks are not spraying. We need to continue to apply pressure through all the forums available to build awareness both within the council and outside community groups on the dangers of glyphosate.

Next Steps:

Look at other council's policies (eg DLRcoco) on glyphosate use - what have they implemented and what is stopping KCC from following those model

Investigate what the council process is for ensuring the correct plan of action is being followed wrt glyphosate use and who to report breaches to

Form a plan for next SPC

All Other SPC Agenda Items:

Ali and Jude took us through the rest of the items discussed at the May SPC - full details in the report attached. Topics discussed and updated on were:

The SPC workplan

The appointment of a graduate to work with the climate action officer in KCC

The national peatlands park proposal,

The climate bill and the climate action plan for KCC,

The Decarbonisation zone selection process and next steps,

Energy Update from the Energy Officer

Query around the process for submitting motions - Joe Boland & Grainne to align

2. PPN Update (Cliona)

Cliona took us through some of the recent work of the PPN including the Secretariat, the Resource Worker and the national secretariat. PPT attached.

3. AOB

Evonne updated that Tidy Towns are considering coming together to have one voice in PPN related discussions

Jude asked us to note that there will be a public consultation on the national peatlands review

The group agreed that the approach for SPCs going forward should be focussing on driving the council into action and on what exactly we expect the council to do around an issue, pointing to where policy can be improved or where it is currently lacking.

4. Dates for Next Meetings:

Date of next linkage group meeting 4th Aug 21 - to discuss Sept SPC agenda Items

Deadline for SPC Agenda Submissions: 11th Aug

Date of next SPC meeting: 8th Sept 21