



KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

CLIMATE ACTION

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE 10TH FEBRUARY 2021

10AM VIA MS TEAMS

PRESENT

Ministers:	Eamon Ryan, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications and Minister for Transport Naoise Grisewood, Private Secretary of Minister Ryan
Councillors:	Peter Hamilton (Chair), Bill Clear, Fintan Brett, Ciara Galvin, Naoise Ó Cearúil, Mark Stafford (Cathaoirleach)
Sectoral Interests:	Judith Browne, PPN – Community/Voluntary Allan Shine, Business/Commercial Tom Malone, Agriculture/Farming Ali Sheridan, PPN - Environmental/ Conservation
Officials:	Peter Carey, Chief Executive Joe Boland, Director of Services Alan Dunney, Regional Coordinator CARO Stephen Deegan, Climate Action Officer Claire Moran, Senior Staff Officer CARO Peter Mulhern, Energy Efficiency Officer Jane O'Reilly, A/Senior Executive Planner Geraldine Morris, Clerical Officer

AGENDA ITEM 3: TO RECEIVE PRESENTATION ON CLIMATE ACTION BILL, ITS OBJECTIVES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES FROM EAMON RYAN, MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND COMMUNICATIONS AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

The Chair opened the meeting, welcoming Minister Ryan, his team, Cllr Stafford and Mr Carey Chief Executive. He introduced the other members of the SPC on the call as well as the officials of KCC. Cllr Stafford (Cathaoirleach) welcomed Minister Ryan, noting in particular how Kildare County Council has addressed climate action through its dedicated Strategic Policy Committee (SPC), Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) as well as through its Climate Action Officer and Energy Efficiency Officer appointments. The effects of fossil fuel demise were very relevant in County Kildare and, in this regard, the local community should not be left behind. The Chief Executive, also welcomed the Minister noting, in particular, that the Eastern and Midlands CARO are leading 17 local authorities and this arrangement is working well. Climate Action is now being mainstreamed throughout the council and this is a key priority. He noted KCC achieved 24% energy efficiency while other initiatives such as EV charging were being progressed. KCC are also working well with the wider business community

through the Local Enterprise Office and Chamber of Commerce. The MDs are also actively involved particularly in relation to the allocation of discretionary LPT funds in order to stimulate community related climate related activity.

Minister Ryan commenced his contribution by giving an overview of the agreed Climate Action targets, where it was agreed to reduce emissions by 55% by 2030 and net zero by 2050. Reducing emissions by 55% by 2030 is a considerable challenge. Climate legislation will be going through the Dáil in the next few weeks. Each government department have stretched targets: there will be 3 x 5 yearly budgets with the aim of ultimately reaching net zero. The proposed new climate plan will seek a particular focus on transport, energy and land use. He highlighted key points as being: electrification of differing uses, investment, improving energy usage of homes to bring 500,000 homes up to a B2 standard, replacing traditional central heating with heat pumps and solar panels, electric charging points for social housing and assisting private homeowners; better air quality etc. Planning housing developments with respect to closeness to schools/shops will be another key factor.

The implementation of the National Planning Framework – i.e., building back up the centre of towns, local environment and less commuting will be another key point. Remote working will probably continue for most people even after pandemic. A challenge will be to redesign the local environment, particularly towns, to encourage modal shift to public transport. He advised that approval for the Southern Distribution Road in Athy will be signed off in the coming week and this will lead to a future reconfiguring of the main street. The electrification of the rail lines as far as Maynooth and possibly to Kilcock will be another priority.

There was also a need to focus on nature-based solutions, for example, working with Bord na Mona to rewet bogs, store carbon, biodiversity as well as upskilling workers and farmers to further this green agenda. Active travel and retrofitting of housing stock will be a key investment focus.

The Chair thanked Minister Ryan for an excellent overview. The Chief Executive warmly welcomed the news relating to the Athy Southern Distribution road. In this context, he referred to a range of ongoing initiatives currently in train for Athy eg., model school food hub, revamp of both squares, Shackleton visitor centre, barrow blueway, a new primary care centre, new community library etc. He also referred to proposed new remote working hubs [MERITS] in Naas as well as an Equine Centre in Kildare Town. The Kilcock extension would be particularly welcomed. In summary, he referred to the key leadership role being played by the Council at local level.

A question and answer session ensued wherein the members present raised issues on the following topics to Minister Ryan:

- Possible extension of rail electrification to Kildare Town
- Dedicated bus route along the N7
- Assessing the merits, or otherwise, of rewetting bogs
- Economic implications of non-availability of milled peat from a horticultural perspective
- Further developing agri-tourism
- Improving public transport, particularly in the major towns
- Additional staff to progress active travel measures
- Further funding for greenways [eg Sallins pilot]

Minister Ryan replied that land use needs to work more efficiently; currently some farmers are earning less than €13k a year which is not sustainable. There will be a significant new opportunity for farming as part of the green/sustainable agenda. Clearly, there will be a need to look innovatively at the future of bogs particularly from a water management perspective. Realistically there is no prospect that peat extraction in an industrial scale will continue. There will, however, be options in terms of future sustainable uses [eg planting alder etc] while the ability to store carbon in the bogs will be of significant benefit to farming.

He stressed the need for sustainable planning, particularly in the East of the Country; a compact approach with an emphasis on access to public transport as envisaged in the National Planning Framework. He was also pleased to advise that 11 new positions have been approved for KCC to progress active travel initiatives.

He also paid tribute to the work of the CARO team and agreed regarding the need for strategic collaboration across a range of issues. The ongoing initiative involving the GAA represented an exemplar in this regard. He also referred to the important role of the SPCs and PPN.

Joe Boland, Director of Services, gave an overview of the current priorities both from a local and sectoral perspective:

- There are 20 staff working nationally in CAROs and this reflects well on the local govt sector, particularly from a leadership perspective.

- The need to build the capacity of the sector. The training plan, currently being rolled out, aims to train all staff and elected members (c.1000 in total) to build the skills and confidence
- Some 74% of adaptation actions have been commenced to date.
- There are 4 Sustainable Energy Communities now active in the county and a further 18 registered.
- A promotional video has been created which will be disseminated to all MDs in Ireland which sets how MDs can locally support climate action.
- There is ongoing strategic collaboration with the GAA and wherein Cappagh is the pilot in County Kildare.
- There is a specified training initiative ongoing aimed at senior staff in planning departments, in conjunction with the Institute of Planners Ireland, the office of the Planning Regulator and DHLGH with the objective of building the confidence and skills in the area of climate action.
- There was also a research initiative ongoing in conjunction with Maynooth University, DETE, IBEC, Chambers Ireland, LEOs and other stakeholders which is seeking to explore business opportunities arising from climate action.

Cllr Stafford closed this part of the meeting, thanking Minister Ryan for his time and answering questions and he looked forward to working with the Minister in progressing a range of further initiatives. He also thanked the chair, Cllr Hamilton, for arranging the meeting. The CE reiterated the thanks and appreciation and also made reference to the recruitment challenges.

Action: SPC to be kept informed on all the forgoing issues.

AGENDA ITEM 1: TO NOTE THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON 8TH DECEMBER 2020 (PETER HAMILTON, CHAIRPERSON)

Minutes were approved.

AGENDA ITEM 2: TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PETER HAMILTON, CHAIRPERSON)

No items were raised.

AGENDA ITEM 4: PRESENTATION FROM THE KILDARE CHAMBER (ALLAN SHINE, CE, KILDARE CHAMBER)

Mr Allan Shine gave a presentation on the workings of Kildare Chamber and referred to its role:

- As the largest business organisation in the Mid-East region of Ireland with 400 members
- In lobbying on behalf of its members and Irish business at local, national and EU - level
- In supporting businesses through lobbying, training, networking and advocating for its members

Chambers Ireland network consists of 41 affiliated members across the island of Ireland which, in turn, represents some 8000 businesses.

Kildare Chamber are represented on various bodies at local and national level for business in County Kildare, a particularly important role given the current economic circumstances.

On the lobbying front, it is supporting the following submissions in the first quarter of 2021:

- Draft County Local Area Plans
- Code of Conduct (right to disconnect)
- Review to Renew - the review of the National Development Plan 2018-2027
- Pre-Draft stage of the County Development Plan
- DAA 3rd runway
- Continuous engagement re Brexit and Covid

The Chamber operates an Innovation Hub which is home to 13 High Potential Start-up Companies and attends trade visits annually (Boston, Dubai and Brussels in 2022)

It set up a Kildare Sustainability Council to help businesses become more sustainable and to reduce their carbon footprint in response to a demand from Companies in Kildare for assistance in preparing for a carbon neutral economy.

ACDAL: – (Allenwood Community Development Association CLG) primary business activities include the provision of flexible space in the form of light industrial units, office space, a remote working facility, the delivery and facilitation of training and an award-winning purpose-built community childcare service in Allenwood. It is home to 75 employees, with an additional 80 on community employment placement. Companies include Labplan, METCOM and Dana Brevini and a mens shed, scouts den and various community related services are also included. Over the past 4 months, ACDAL has been successful in securing grants from Dredid, Enterprise Ireland and now through the Just Transition Fund. New businesses have set up in Allenwood, planning for a new playground is progressing and engagement with key bodies have commenced (MU, NACEC, EI, IDA)

The Chair thanked Allan for his presentation. In response to a query from Ali Sheridan, Allan advised there were SDG awards hosted by Climate Ireland which award business that excel in terms of sustainability though these mainly related to larger enterprises. The focus for 2021 is on helping SMEs, in particular, in eradicating plastics and bringing waste to zero and a lot of the focus is 'green'.

A further discussion ensued wherein there was broad satisfaction expressed regarding progress to date by the new Board and of the collaboration which was ongoing, particularly in relation to LEADER and LEO. It was also noted that there was ongoing interest being expressed regarding the establishment of new businesses (eg tyre recycling) including significant collaboration with a range of stakeholders at national level.

A brief overview was also given to the meeting regarding a research initiative which the CARO is progressing in conjunction with Maynooth University and a range of other stakeholders at regional and national level. This relates to the business opportunities which are likely to emerge from climate relation activity. In turn, this research will inform, in particular, LEO support programmes as well as local authority economic development strategies.

Action: From a policy perspective, it was agreed that the area of business opportunity would be a priority consideration for the SPC. It was also agreed to receive a presentation from CARO in due course on its research initiative.

AGENDA ITEM 5: CLIMATE PROOFING THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN – (JANE O'REILLY, A/SENIOR EXECUTIVE PLANNER, POLICY & RESEARCH)

Jane O'Reilly gave an overview and outline of the upcoming County Development Plan 2023-2029, to include,

Hierarchy of Plans: National, Regional, Local

Policy Guides: Climate Action, Environmental Reports, Guidelines

Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)

Process and Timelines

Brief County Profile

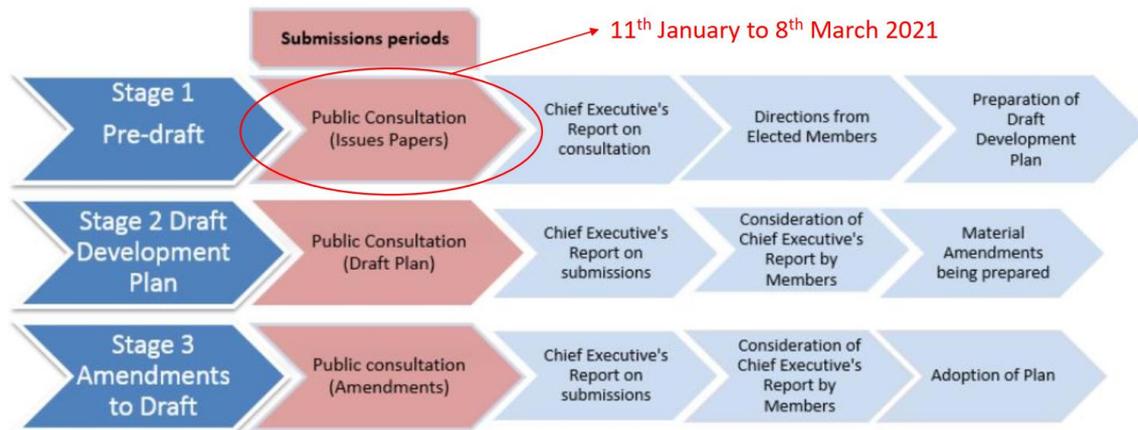
Pre-Draft Issues Paper: Key themes and questions

All of the following feed into the County Development Plan:

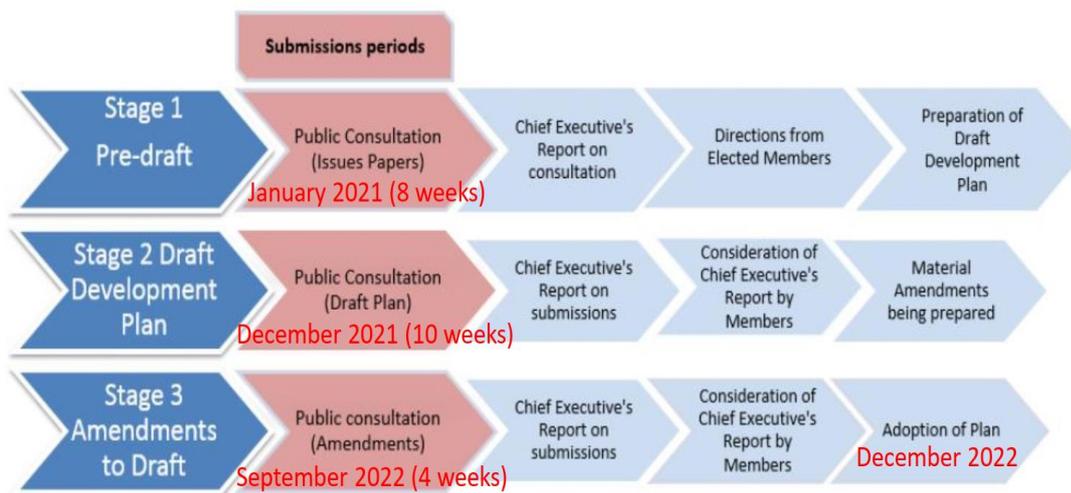
- The Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework.
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031
- Settlement Hierarchy involving key towns - self-sustaining growth towns - self-sustaining towns – towns – villages – rural areas.
- Metropolitan Area Strategy Plan
- Environmental Reports to include the Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

The Office of the Planning Regulator has an overseeing role.

A review of the stages includes:



And the timelines are:



Jane gave a brief overview of the profile of Kildare from population, homes, work, mobility aspects.

A pre-draft issues paper has been circulated to include:

1. Healthy Placemaking: People and Places
2. Economic Opportunity: Innovation, Enterprise and Employment
3. Climate Action: Environment, Climate Change and Adaptation
4. Sustainable Mobility: Movement & Transport
5. Creative Places: Social, Community and Cultural Development

6. Enhanced Amenity & Heritage: Landscape and Green Infrastructure
7. Making it Happen: Infrastructure, Energy & Communications.

The CDP will be climate proofed to include the following aspects:

- Sustainable Energy Climate Action Plan (SECAP)
- Decarbonisation Zones
- Adherence to KCC Climate Adaptation Strategy
- Consideration of issues raised during public consultation
- Working forum to be established involving Climate Action Officer and Energy Efficiency Officer, CARO and Forward Planning team.

A general discussion ensued which, from a policy perspective, focused on the importance of robust climate/sustainable policies being embedded in the County Development Plan, particularly in the context of its longer term focus.

Action: Robust sustainability/climate action policies to be included in the draft County Development Plan.

AGENDA ITEM 6: NOTICE OF QUESTION: GIVEN THE RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH THE NTA AND ORIS FUNDING, HOW CAN WE IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS OF SUCH FUNDING WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY? (ALI SHERIDAN, PPN REPRESENTATIVE)

Ali Sheridan had to leave the meeting and Judith Browne presented the question in her absence. The following written answer was submitted by the Climate Action Officer:

“NTA Funding.

A sum of €1.84 million, was allocated by the NTA in the July 2020 Stimulus Package, with projects to be delivered before end of November 2020. The timelines prescribed were exceptionally tight to procure, appoint contractors, deliver and recoup claims. In this respect the projects selected were those deemed deliverable within this window. All projects were delivered bar a very small sum which was carried over to Q1 2021 with NTA agreement.

A Sustainable Infrastructure team is currently in place headed up by Stephen Cummins A/SE based in the NRO office. At Budget time, the 2021 NTA funded works programme was agreed with the members and Stephen and his team are working with the NTA to deliver.

Note1. *This is a fund which is directly paid to Local Authorities from the National Transport Authority and has no direct community scope. The proposed schemes are however informed through the MDs*

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

The Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme was established by the Government to provide funding for developing infrastructure which encourages healthy and active lifestyles while also supporting the economic and tourism potential for local communities. Projects are

split into three categories based on cost of the project and fund projects that cost up to €500,000.

The most recent round of ORIS funding had a deadline of November 2020 and measure 1 (up to €20,000) results were announced in early 2021. Kildare had no projects listed. This has created a misconception that Kildare is not active enough in the Outdoor Recreation space which is incorrect. The Kildare projects team are actively pursuing many multi million euro outdoor recreation projects with a much broader scope than ORIS can deliver – eg Grand Canal Greenway, Barrow Blueway, Kerdiffstown Park, Sallins Amenity Lands to mention a few.

However, the ORIS programme, does have a place, and could be of vital importance at a community level where existing outdoor recreational spaces would benefit from extending, accessibility, digitisation, signage or other improvements of scale.

Note2. *The ORIS is a fund that Community Groups are eligible to apply for. Community Groups can identify projects and seek funding themselves.*

Funding opportunities generally

In the context of Climate Action, CARO have identified a list of funding possibilities in a very detailed report, already provided to the PPN. Kildare Climate Action Team is developing some further guidance in this area, to endeavour to direct stakeholders eg Council Department & Communities to such funding opportunities. Kildare PPN regularly issues notices on funding opportunities. The funding uptake from communities is very varied. Traditionally, organised sports groups have become very strong funding applicants (and could potentially be used as a benchmark), Tidy Towns groups are also better than most, however after that the expertise within communities is limited. In the energy context, expertise is rising through the SEC network.

This is where the sector would benefit from some encouragement and advice, possibly in the form of workshops around project identification and completion of funding application forms. Another area of difficulty for community groups on the larger National Funding opportunities is in the area of bridging finance and / or having to provide matching funding”.

A brief discussion ensure wherein it was noted that this issue was also arising at MD level. It was suggested that the opportunity for ORIS funding wasn't widely advertised.

Action: Director to raised and discuss at Management Team

AGENDA ITEM 7: MD VIDEO FEEDBACK – (CLAIRE MORAN, SENIOR STAFF OFFICER CARO OFFICE)

Claire Moran, Senior Staff Officer, attended to give feedback from the Climate Action video. All MDs have seen the video and CARO have received very positive feedback. The video was considered to be really helpful to demonstrate what can be done to support climate action in the community. It was also very inspiring. This will now be rolled out to all MDs nationally.

Action: The SPC to be kept informed.

AGENDA ITEM 8: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair referred to the desirability of arranging a joint meeting with the Transport SPC at a future date to explore the potential for interaction on a range of possible initiatives.

AGENDA ITEM 9: TO NOTE DATE OF NEXT MEETING –12TH MAY 2021 AT 10AM, ARRANGEMENTS TO BE CONFIRMED

Noted

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and meeting closed at 12.30pm