

Minutes of the Strategic Policy Committee Meeting for Climate Action and Environmental Services held in MTEK1 on Monday 30th January, 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present: Cllrs. N. Keelan, P. Treanor, R. Truell, S. Coyle, R. Aughey
B. Treanor, IFA, B. Duffy, Castleblayney Regeneration, P. Tierney, PPN Community, N. Woods, B. Smyth, P. McGuinness, N. Malone, K. Duffy, S. Clerkin, P. Sherlock, B. McMahon,

Apologies: M. Mayne, L. Murtagh

Cllr. Keelan welcomed the members to the meeting and wished everyone a happy new year.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting:

The minutes were proposed by C. Bennett and seconded by P. Treanor

2. Matters Arising

Cllr. Keelan raised the following items for discussion:

- **Meeting with SEAI:** to be kept on agenda for next meeting of the SPC N. Woods confirmed that this would be accommodated.
- **Recruitment of Staff:** N. Woods advised that the Climate Co-Ordinator position had been offered to the first on the panel. However, they are awaiting approval on secondment to the Council from their employer as it is a 5-year term position. The interviews for the position of Community Climate Officer are being held later this week. The position of Climate Action Officer will be advertised in the next few weeks.
- **Update on EV charging points:** Following Minister Ryan's recent announcement regarding the funding of additional EV points, K. Duffy advised that he and N. Skinnader had recently met with the Dept. It is envisaged that a draft strategy will be drawn up and funding requested from the Department. Members welcomed this development and highlighted the importance of having accessible points throughout the County.

3. (a) Ammonia for the CAAN Project

P. Sherlock, Conservation Officer in the Heritage section, presented on the ongoing Ammonia monitoring on Sliabh Beagh. Ammonia monitoring is occurring at 7 sites on Sliabh Beagh in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. 3 Alpha samplers are set out at each monitoring point and collected monthly. The samplers are then sent to the UK Centre of Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) for testing. The peak times for high Ammonia concentrations are in March/April and June/July. This is due to land spreading emissions from manure/slurry occurring during this timeframe. The peaks in the summer months are also due to increased land surface emissions in warmer, drier conditions e.g., from higher levels of grazing. The smallest concentrations are in winter due to reduced emissions, and Ammonia being washed out by the wetter weather.

Cllr. Keelan thanked Mr. Sherlock for his informative presentation and invited questions from members. Mr. Sherlock from members including the different rates between Southern and Northern Ireland and confirmed that the emission rate is recorded in micro grams per cubic metre.

(b) Monaghan Hedgerow Conservation Plan & Guidelines

The Heritage Officer, Shirley Clerkin presented two documents relating to hedgerows in County Monaghan. Both of these were developed in 2022, further to the 2021 Hedgerow Survey of the county which showed a concerning decline in the extent and quality of this habitat type. Survey results indicate a removal figure of 0.9% annually, and that 87.9% of hedgerows are in unfavourable condition.

The first of these, a Conservation Strategy for Hedgerows sets out five thematic conservation strategies with accompanying actions that can be led by the local authority and other partners to create advocacy and improvements for hedgerows. In summary, these are: Implement a Hedge care protocol; Protect hedgerows from removal; Expand and restore native hedgerows; Identify Heritage Hedgerows; Inform and include the public.

The second document speaks directly to the local authority staff, titled Hedgerow Conservation Guidelines for Planners and Road Engineers. This outlines key information on legislation, policies and provides guidance to aid in the protection and conservation of hedgerows and trees when carrying out projects related to a wide range of development and road projects. It also contains guidance on ecologically sensitive hedgerow management, aiming to help key personnel and stakeholders to take the actions necessary to protect and conserve hedgerows as part of their work.

Workshops were held with key staff in May 2022 to tease out the issues around hedgerow protection and practices. Further workshops are in planning for 2023. This work is co-funded by the Heritage Council through the Heritage Plan fund.

She also played a short video that has been shown at Ballybay Mart highlighting good practice regarding our hedgerows.

Members commended Ms. S. Clerkin on her comprehensive presentation, and she invited questions from members. Questions included queries on hedge cutting, particularly relating to road safety issues, council owned lands and the issue of ash dieback. Cllr. Keelan queried if Ms. Clerkin would give a presentation on biodiversity at the next meeting. Ms. Clerkin confirmed that she would facilitate this.

4. 2023 National Environmental Enforcement Priorities

Kieran Duffy, A/Senior Executive Engineer presented on the annual RMCEI inspection and enforcement plan that Monaghan County Council and all local authorities are required to prepare and submit to the EPA by 28TH February each year.

It was outlined during the presentation that the RMCEI plan is a document that details the local authority's proposed work for the year ahead under the various National Enforcement Priority (NEP) thematic areas of waste, water, and air/noise. A brief summary of the 15 NEPs for 2023 in the water, waste and air/noise work areas was presented. It was explained that although the majority of the RMCEI work plan will be delivered by the Environmental Services unit, there are a number of work areas captured by the RMCEI plan that overlaps into other sections of the council including roads, water services and Fire Services. In addition to preparing an RMCEI plan for the year ahead it was outlined that Environmental Services will also be preparing an end of year report which will detail the work carried out by Monaghan County Council in progressing the National Enforcement Priorities during 2022.

In conclusion, Kieran Duffy commended the work of the environmental team in delivering the RMCEI work plans over the years as this work in the past has seen staff on occasion working in difficult and

dangerous situations and dealing with unscrupulous operators. This sentiment was echoed by Cllr Noel Keelan who also paid tribute to the environment staff for their work in the environmental area.

5. Environmental Sustainability – Greening Events (Festivals)

B. Duffy made a short presentation to members on the environmental impact of festivals and events held in recent years in Castleblayney. Such gatherings generate large amounts of waste, much of it single-use and made of plastic. Another kind of festival held recently in the town, the Big Truck Event, produced serious levels of air pollution and considerable noise pollution, and was also potentially dangerous due to the lengthy touring through the town centre of HGVs and tractors. He suggested that, given the negative effects on the environment and human health of such events, it was desirable that Monaghan County Council formulate a policy to encourage the ‘greening’ of festivals and events. He proposed that such a policy could draw upon existing ‘Green Festivals’ guidelines produced by the Local Authority Prevention Network (LAPN) .

Cllr. Keelan thanked Mr. Duffy for his comments. A short discussion followed, and P. McGuinness will have a look at the LAPN guidelines. N. Malone advised he will also liaise with the Environmental Awareness Officer on this issue. Monaghan County Council currently don’t licence festivals not organised by them. He will revert back to the members for the next meeting with further information. S. Clerkin informed members that there is a local festival grants scheme that groups may be able to avail of. Cllr Keelan thanked Mr. Duffy for raising this issue.

6. Update on Pound Fees

B. Smyth notified the meeting of some increases in Dog Pound Fees, which were last changed in 2018. Fees for voluntarily surrendering a dog for collection by the Dog Warden were increased by €5, to €60 for a licenced dog and €75 for an unlicenced dog. The basic reclaim fee for a dog was increased from €70 to €75. This does not include additional fees for extra days spent in the Pound or for microchipping and registration of the dog. The fees for voluntarily surrendering a dog direct to the Dog Pound and for rehoming a dog have not been increased.

N. Keelan thanked Mr. Smyth for his update. Mr. Smyth answered questions from members regarding restricted breeds, sheep worrying and the reasoning behind the proposed changes to the pound fees.

7. Climate Change Risk Assessments and Baseline Emissions Inventory Reports

K. Duffy advised that Monaghan County Council had engaged KPMG and Fehily Timoney and Company to prepare a Climate Risk assessment and a Baseline emissions inventory, respectively, which were carried out in accordance with Annex B and Annex C of the Draft Local Authority Climate Action Plan guidelines. When completed these reports will provide very important risk assessment data and emission baseline data which will help inform the development of the new Climate Action Plan which all local authorities are tasked with preparing over the coming 12 months.

Cllr. Keelan thanked Mr. Duffy for the update. It was agreed that this item would be carried forward to be included at the next SPC meeting.

8. Proposed Meeting Dates for 2023

The following dates were proposed and accepted by members:

Monday 29th May, 2023 at 10.00 am

Monday 11th September, 2023 at 10.00 am

Monday 13th November, 2023 at 10.00 am

9. AOB

Cllr. Keelan requested that any other business be placed on the agenda for all meetings going forward.

He also requested that we invite the SEAI to give a presentation by the SEAI to a joint meeting with the Housing SPC. Cllr Treanor confirmed that the next Housing SPC meeting will be held on 13/3/2023. N. Woods confirmed we will liaise with Housing to facilitate this.

Cllr. Keelan queried if Ms. Clerkin could give a presentation to the next meeting relating to Biodiversity. Ms. Clerkin confirmed that she would be available.

It was queried if more information on EV infrastructure could be made available for the next meeting.

On foot of information regarding a national rollout of reverse vending machines, Cllr. Keelan queried if we could get more information on this.

Could we ensure going forward that festival organizers be requested to be more waste conscious? N. Woods advised that will ask the organizers of any festivals the County Council is involved with to be made aware of this.

Date of next meeting: Monday 29th May, 2023 at 10.00 am in the Council Chamber, MTEK 1, Monaghan.

Cllr. Keelan thanked members for their attendance.