

Minutes of the SPC Climate Action and Environment meeting held in the Knocknagrave Environmental Education Centre on Monday 23/02/2026 at 2.30pm.

Present: Cllrs R. Truell (Chair), N. O'Connor (DOS), N. Keelan, S. Flynn, P. Clerkin, P. McCreesh, N. Malone, K. Duffy, E. Brennan, L. Murtagh, N. McMeel, L. Cunningham, K. McEntegart, E. Morgan, J. McVeigh, G. O'Connell, M. Smith, M. Coyle and J. Rosney.

Cllr. R. Truell welcomed the members to the meeting.

1. Presentation from Tydavnet Group Water Scheme on the Educational Centre at Knocknagrave School.

S. Clerkin gave a presentation explaining that the Knocknagrave Environmental Education Centre & Biodiversity Garden in Tydavnet has been repurposed as a dedicated facility for water conservation and biodiversity education. S. Clerkin stated that the centre, opened in 2023, includes interactive indoor learning spaces and a one-acre biodiversity garden featuring a wildflower meadow, wildlife ponds, an orchard, and a woodland walk. S. Clerkin further informed the members that the centre also serves as a community hub, incorporating sustainable features such as a rainwater-refill station, solar panels, and heat pump technology to support both educational and wider environmental initiatives.

2. The minutes of the previous meeting, held in November 2025, were proposed by E. Brennan and seconded by L. Murtagh.

3. Presentation from LAWPRO.

J. McVeigh delivered a comprehensive presentation to the members on the Local Authority Waters Programme, outlining its coordination role in implementing the EU Water Framework Directive and supporting river basin management planning across all 31 local authorities. J. McVeigh informed the members of the current water-quality conditions in Monaghan, noting the key pressures affecting at-risk waterbodies, including agriculture, urban runoff, hydromorphology, and wastewater discharges. J. McVeigh stated that priority areas for action have been identified under both the second and third cycles, with particular attention to Scotstown Blue Dot, Lough Muckno, the Blackwater, the Kilroosky Lough Cluster, and several Group Water Schemes. In addition, J. McVeigh advised that catchment assessments are carried out through chemistry sampling, biological surveys, river walks, and urban assessments, with issues escalated to the appropriate agencies through the established referrals process.

G. O'Connell presented a detailed update to the members on the Farming for Water EIP. G. O'Connell reported a €60 million national initiative aimed at improving water quality beyond regulatory compliance through targeted agricultural measures, supported by a multi-agency partnership led by LAWPRO, Teagasc, and Dairy Industry Ireland. G. O'Connell advised that locally, applications in Monaghan emphasise nutrient and sediment-reduction measures with strong engagement from farm, community, and industry partners. G. O'Connell reported that additional updates included

community-engagement projects funded through the Community Water Development Fund and Catchment Support Fund, ongoing nature-based solutions work, and training delivered to Monaghan County Council staff in 2025, with further training planned for 2026. G. O'Connell stated that joint actions for 2026 include the Emyvale Weir mitigation project, wetlands planning upstream of Lough Muckno, and further NbS initiatives. In addition, G. O'Connell advised that continued collaboration between LAWPRO and Monaghan County Council will support ongoing advancements in catchment science and water-quality improvements.

Cllr R. Truell thanked J. McVeigh and G. O'Connell for their presentation and invited questions from the members. J. McVeigh addressed queries relating to water abstraction, water-characterisation process, slurry storage, flooding issues, and the current actions being undertaken by LAWPRO.

4. Presentation from the environment section on the RMCEI plan for 2026.

K. Duffy provided a presentation to the members giving an overview of the 2026 recommended minimum criteria for Environmental Inspections RMCEI Plan, outlining its purpose as the national framework guiding environmental inspection targets and enforcement activities. K. Duffy advised that the plan was being prepared in line with the National Environmental Enforcement Priorities for water, waste and air/noise, as issued by the Environmental Protection Agency in December 2025. K. Duffy informed members of the fact that the plan supports consistent implementation of EU environmental law while directing resources toward key priority areas. K. Duffy reported that the presentation also highlighted Monaghan County Council's strong performance rating in the EPA's most recent National Environmental Enforcement Performance Report, achieving high-level scores across the majority of national enforcement priorities. In addition, K. Duffy stated that this performance reflects the council's ongoing commitment to meeting and exceeding national environmental compliance expectations.

M. Smith delivered a presentation to the members outlining the key inspection programmes included in the 2026 RMCEI operational plan, covering agricultural inspections of farmyards and farmland, discharge licence monitoring, misconnection investigations, and actions responding to local water-quality pressures. M. Smith reported that details of these work areas would be included in our RMCEI submission to the EPA, including the 2025 inspection plan returns, the 2025 National Enforcement Priority progress reports, and the 2026 inspection plan. M. Smith stated that approximately 3,665 inspections were proposed in the 2026 RMCEI Plan, noting the wide scope of activities involved. M. Smith advised that priority work areas for 2026 include addressing agricultural impacts on water quality, ensuring compliance with discharge licences, managing oversight of septic tanks and private water supplies, and supporting investigative and statutory monitoring programmes across identified priority areas. Furthermore, M. Smith informed members that these actions form a core element of the Council's environmental enforcement and compliance responsibilities for the coming year.

The chair invited questions and discussion from members following the presentation. M. Smith and K. Duffy addressed queries relating to supporting farmers, Bunoe River, flooding, slurry storage, water information signage, rainwater, and the notice period provided to farmers.

5. An update from Dr. Patricia McCreesh, Biodiversity Officer, on the Biodiversity Action Plan following the public consultation.

Dr P. McCreesh gave a detailed update on the draft biodiversity action plan, noting that the public consultation ran from 5th December to 2nd January and resulted in 14 submissions. Dr P. McCreesh reported that the submissions demonstrated strong public engagement and highlighted recurring themes, including support for mainstreaming biodiversity across all council functions and enhanced hedgerow protection. Dr P. McCreesh stated that other key themes included the expansion of nature-based solutions across public realm and capital projects, strengthened wetland protection and enforcement, and increased species-level actions such as swift and bat conservation measures. Dr P. McCreesh stated that further feedback emphasised the need for more specific biodiversity indicators; clearer policy alignment, particularly with the Nature Restoration Law, National Nature Restoration Plan and CAP; and improved transparency through the inclusion of responsible partners across all action tables.

In addition, Dr P. McCreesh advised the members that the requested changes can be accommodated through targeted updates rather than a material expansion of the draft. Dr P. McCreesh spoke about proposed amendments, including incorporating statutory AA/SEA screenings, updating policy references, correcting designated site information, and integrating partners such as NPWS, LAWPRO, Coillte, IWT, NBDC and Swift Conservation Ireland into the action tables. Dr P. McCreesh further informed the members that she is seeking approval from the SPC members for the consolidated edits as outlined, with the updated plan to progress to the Corporate Policy Group in April and to Full Council in May 2026, ahead of a proposed launch during Biodiversity Week in May.

The chair invited questions and discussion from members following the presentation. Dr P. McCreesh addressed queries relating to the feedback-evaluation process for the Biodiversity Action Plan. The Biodiversity Action Plan was then proposed by P. Clerkin and seconded by L. Murtagh.

6. Update provided by the Climate Action Unit.

E. Morgan provided a detailed presentation to the members on the progress of the Community Climate Action Programme Phase 2, noting that the scheme opened on 28th October 2025 and closed on 6th January 2026, with Monaghan receiving an allocation of €392,000 in per-capita funding. E. Morgan reported that demand exceeded available resources significantly, with 37 applications submitted seeking a total of €1.38 million over three times the funding available. E. Morgan informed the members that outreach and engagement activities included presentations, library clinics, social media promotion, newspaper advertising, website updates, and one-to-one meetings. E. Morgan stated that eighteen projects were recommended to the department for approval, including solar PV and battery-storage installations, bicycle racks, water-refill stations, motion-sensor lighting, LED push-button controls, native tree and hedgerow planting, and rainwater-harvesting infrastructure. Furthermore, E. Morgan advised that the next steps include departmental decision-making in March/April, followed by letters of offer in April/May and project commencement from May/June, with all projects to be completed within 18 months.

M. Coyle gave a presentation to the members providing an update on the Local Government Management Agency 2025 Climate Action KPI reporting, which was submitted in January 2026. M. Coyle stated that the report noted substantial progress in implementing the Climate Action Plan, with 102 actions completed, 32 in progress, and 19 not yet started, demonstrating strong improvement from 2024 when 60 actions were completed, 51 were in progress, and 42 had not commenced. M. Coyle advised that the Climate Action Unit emphasised the continued embedding of

climate action across the organisation. Furthermore, M. Coyle spoke about the confirmation that overall progress remains aligned with the full implementation of the Climate Action Plan.

The chair invited questions and discussion from members following the presentation. E. Morgan and M. Coyle addressed queries relating to successful applications for funding and climate KPIs.

7. Update on MCC's LMP 2026–2029 going to public consultation and timelines to publish.

N. Malone provided an update on the Draft Litter Management Plan 2026–2029, outlining the statutory process required to review, consult on, and formally adopt the plan. N. Malone reported that the draft was finalised internally in December 2025, followed by design and Irish translation work scheduled for January–February 2026. N. Malone advised that the statutory public consultation period is due to run for a minimum of four weeks during February–March 2026, after which submissions will be compiled and the final draft prepared for further consideration.

Furthermore, N. Malone spoke about the subsequent governance steps required for adoption, including SPC approval on the 20th April 2026, followed by the Corporate Policy Group approval on the 19st May 2026, with formal adoption by the full Council on the 8th June 2026. N. Malone informed the members that, once adopted, the plan will be published, and implementation will commence from June/July 2026, supported by the associated deliverables such as the full draft litter management plan, consultation documentation, and publication on the council website.

The Chair noted that N. Malone was seeking approval from the SPC members for the Litter Management Plan to proceed to public consultation. Cllr R. Truell proposed the motion, and E. Brennan seconded it. N. Malone also addressed queries regarding vape shops in relation to the Litter Management Plan.

8. Dates for SPC meeting for 2026 Diary:

- 20th April 2026 – 3rd Week in April.
- 19th October 2026 - 3rd Week in October - 4th Monday in October is a bank holiday.

9. AOB

L. Murtagh enquired about the number of meetings scheduled for the year; N. Malone and N. O'Connor stated that there are three meetings currently planned, with the possibility of a fourth depending on the agenda.

Cllr R. Truell thanked the presenters and members for their engagement with the issues raised. The meeting concluded at 4.45 pm.