

Minutes of the Strategic Policy Committee Meeting for Climate Action and Environmental Services held in the Clones MD Council Chamber on Monday 24th November 2025. 2025 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, A. Forde, N. McMeel, L. Cunnigham, A. Forde, K. McEntegart, B. McAree, A.E. Walsh, M. Carroll, S. Treanor and J. Rosney.

Cllr. Truell welcomed the members to the meeting.

1. Minutes of Previous Meetings.

The minutes were proposed by Cllr. S. Flynn and seconded by A. Forde.

2. Presentation from Dr Patricia McCreesh, on “Tree and Hedgerow Strategy for Monaghan County Council”.

Dr. Patricia McCreesh gave a comprehensive presentation to members regarding the Tree and Hedgerow Strategy for Monaghan County Council. Dr. Patricia McCreesh informed the members the strategy provides a clear vision for managing trees and hedgerows across the county, outlining objectives and measurable actions to support sustainable tree care, biodiversity, and climate resilience. Dr. Patricia McCreesh spoke about how the draft aims to protect existing treescapes on both public and private land, increase canopy cover, and improve species diversity while engaging communities and stakeholders through education and involvement. Dr. P. McCreesh advised the strategy aligns with national and local planning policies and addresses legal obligations, risk management, and best practices in tree care. Dr. McCreesh stated Monaghan’s landscape includes over 12,845 km of hedgerows with 37 species, a canopy cover of approximately 17%, and a strong cultural and historical connection to trees.

Dr. P. McCreesh advised the strategy also considers challenges such as climate change, population growth, development pressures, ash dieback, pests, diseases, and unauthorised works. Dr. Patricia McCreesh spoke about how the draft emphasises compiling a tree inventory, planning for future needs, and integrating arboricultural considerations into development processes from initial design to construction supervision and tree protection. Dr. McCreesh stated by adopting this approach, Monaghan County Council seeks to safeguard its treescape, enhance environmental benefits, and ensure compliance with planning and legislative requirements while fostering collaboration with communities and partner organisations. Dr. McCreesh reported that by compiling an inventory of trees across the county, the council can better understand the treescape and help to identify works and develop a tree care program. In addition, Dr. McCreesh stated that it would be beneficial to secure funding for a tree officer for the county.

Cllr. R. Truell thanked Dr. McCreesh for her presentation and invited questions from members. Dr. McCreesh addressed inquiries concerning the removal of trees affected by ash dieback along the roads in the Monaghan area, as well as the potential for grant funding in Monaghan for the removal of these trees. N. O'Connor (DOS) recommended reaching out to Leitrim County Council to inquire about their tree funding grants. Dr. P. McCreesh indicated that the Tree and Hedgerow Strategy will undergo public consultation during the upcoming four weeks.

3. Presentation from Dr Patricia McCreesh, Biodiversity Officer, on “Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030”.

Dr. Patricia McCreesh gave a detailed presentation to members on the Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan that outlines a framework to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the county. Dr. McCreesh reported that the structure is around four key themes: knowledge and research, conservation and restoration, governance and leadership, and connecting to nature. Dr. Patricia McCreesh discussed the importance of the plan in emphasising the management of invasive species, strategies for trees and hedgerows, and the centralization of biodiversity data to facilitate informed decision-making. Dr. Patricia McCreesh stated that the development of a biodiversity guidance document for MCC sections engaged in planning, design, and construction aims to offer practical, locally pertinent guidance on achieving biodiversity-positive results, emphasising habitat protection, species conservation, and net biodiversity gain. Dr. Patricia McCreesh spoke about the collaboration with the MCC Climate Action Team in delivering biodiversity actions from the Climate Action Plan (2024–2029). Climate and biodiversity deliver co-benefits that enhance ecosystem resilience, support carbon sequestration, and improve community well-being. Dr. P. McCreesh advised the possibility for the establishment of an MCC ‘Green Team’ of volunteer staff that are interested in promoting biodiversity, environmental, climate & sustainability issues.

Dr. McCreesh reported further prioritising the focus on restoring ecosystems, supporting conservation projects like Sliabh Beagh SAC and wetlands, promoting biodiversity-friendly land management, and implementing national frameworks such as the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Dr. Patricia McCreesh spoke about how the governance measures include embedding biodiversity into MCC policies, reducing pesticide use, piloting nature-based solutions, and ensuring compliance with national and EU legislation. Dr. P. McCreesh advised the progress will be tracked through clear KPIs such as audits completed, habitats restored, species monitored, and participation levels in community projects. Dr. McCreesh states that community engagement is central, with initiatives for education, citizen science, local action plans, and biodiversity conferences to foster awareness and stewardship.

Dr. McCreesh responded to inquiries concerning the ancient woodland located in the Monaghan region and the alternatives to peat. Dr. McCreesh indicated that the ancient woodland in the Monaghan area is not under the ownership of the council; it is privately held. Dr. McCreesh noted that this situation can present challenges; however, it is possible to enhance public awareness of biodiversity by organising free-to-attend biodiversity events and training sessions. The motion for the Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 was proposed by L. Cunningham and seconded by B. McAree.

4. Update from Shane Treanor, on Phase 2 of the Community Climate Action Programme.

S. Treanor gave a presentation to members regarding the second round of the Community Climate Action Programme, which opened for applications on the 28th of October 2025 and will close on the 6th of January 2026. S. Treanor reported the Monaghan County Council has received €392,000 in funding for Phase 2, Strand 1, with criteria remaining unchanged from Phase 1. S. Treanor advised that the Community Climate Action Officer is actively supporting local groups through social media campaigns, meetings, and drop-in clinics scheduled for the 28th of November in Clones Library, the 1st of December in Carrickmacross Library, and the 2nd of December in Monaghan Town Library. S. Treanor stated that there is already a good mix of potential applications from the three MDs, but everyone is encouraged to share this funding opportunity within their networks.

L. Cunningham inquired whether the Water Schemes are eligible to apply for funding. S. Treanor and N. O’Connor responded that they would investigate the potential for funding for the water schemes.

5. Update from Niall Malone, Administrative Officer on the “Environment, Biodiversity & Circular Economy Fund 2026”.

N. Malone gave a presentation to members regarding the Monaghan County Council’s Environment, Biodiversity, and Circular Economy Fund, which is now open for applications, with a closing date of Friday, 9 January 2026, to allow early decisions for planning purposes. N. Malone stated that eligible applicants include community and voluntary groups, organisations, and residents’ committees within County Monaghan, provided they are registered with the Monaghan Public Participation Network. N. Malone notified the members that only one application per group is allowed and that the application process is entirely online this year. N. Malone spoke about how the projects may include maintenance activities such as litter control and upkeep of public spaces; environmental improvements like street furniture; and biodiversity initiatives such as planting native species, creating hedgerows, installing bat and bird boxes, and developing biodiversity action plans. In addition, N. Malone stated other projects include hosting educational events, circular economy projects including reuse and repair schemes, upcycling and waste prevention campaigns.

Cllr. R. Truell thanked N. Malone for his presentation and invited questions from members. N. Malone addressed inquiries regarding the total funding amount available in comparison to the previous year.

6. Update from Niall Malone, Administrative Officer on “Monaghan County Council’s Litter Management Plan 2025-2028.”

N. Malone gave a detailed presentation to members regarding the Litter Management Plan, which sets out Monaghan County Council’s strategy to prevent and control litter across the county. N. Malone stated that the plan builds on previous progress and emphasises shared responsibility among residents, businesses, and visitors. N. Malone reported the plan includes education and awareness campaigns, community engagement through initiatives like Green Schools, Picker Pals, and Tidy Towns, as well as enforcement measures such as fines, CCTV monitoring, and household waste compliance checks. N. Malone spoke about how the plan addresses specific challenges like dog fouling, cigarette and vaping litter, illegal dumping, and litter from convenience food outlets, while promoting sustainable practices through schemes like Deposit Return, green dog walker scheme, national spring clean, Monaghan clean up and “Green Your Festival.”

N. Malone informed the members of a new project that the waste team completed in September. N. Malone advised that the project focuses on investigating the people in Monaghan to see if they have a registered bin, and if not, we will be sending legal notices. N. Malone spoke about how the plan outlines the actions under four pillars: education and awareness, partnership and community support, local authority prevention and control, and enforcement and regulation. N. Malone stated the key measures include supporting cleanup campaigns, maintaining street cleaning schedules, servicing litter bins, and implementing anti-dumping initiatives. N. Malone reported that the progress will be monitored through annual reviews, litter surveys, and key performance indicators such as complaint numbers, fines issued, and Tidy Towns results. In addition, N. Malone informed the members that the plan concludes by emphasising the collaboration among stakeholders and fostering a culture of responsible waste management to keep Monaghan clean, attractive, and environmentally sustainable. N. Malone announced that the Litter Management Plan is scheduled for public consultation in Qtr 1 of 2026.

Cllr. R. Truell thanked N. Malone for his presentation and invited questions from members. N. Malone addressed inquiries concerning CCTV, litter fines, GDPR, say it APP, recycling events, and the water system in Rossmore Park. Additional questions pertained to registered bins in the area, and the procedure for submitting litter complaints to the council. K. Duffy informed the members that he is

currently working on creating complaints form on the council's website for public use. The motion for the Litter Management Plan 2025-2028 was proposed by B. McAree and seconded by R. Truell.

7. Proposed provisional dates for our SPC meetings in 2026

The provisional dates for the 2026 diary were discussed and collectively confirmed by all members during the meeting.

List below provides dates for upcoming SPC meetings 2026:

- Monday, 23rd February 2026 - 4th Week in February
- Monday, 22nd June 2026 - 4th Week in June
- Monday, 19th October 2026 - 3rd Week in October - 4th Monday in October is a Bank Holiday

8. AOB

L. Murtagh requested that the Q1 2026 meeting have a focus on water quality and include a presentation from the Environmental Services Water Quality Team and LAWPRO on their work in this area..

Cllr. R. Truell thanked the presenters and members for their engagement with the issues raised.

Next meeting is booked for 23rd of February 2026, in the Knocknagrave School, Tydavnet at 2.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 4.30 pm.