

Minutes of the Meeting of Limerick City & County Council Climate Action, Biodiversity and Environment Strategic Policy Committee held on Tuesday 9th February 2021 at 4pm via Video Conference

Members Present:

Cllr. Scanlan, (Chairperson), Cllr. Hartigan, Cllr. Collins (M), Cllr. Sheahan (M), Cllr. Collins (B), Cllr. Secas, Cllr. O'Brien, Cllr. Sheahan (J), Cllr. Talukder, Cllr. Benson, Cllr. Sheahan (K), Cllr. O'Donoghue and Cllr. Galvin.

Ms. Gabbett (PPN), Mr. Hedderman (PPN), Ms. Hayes (PPN) and Mr. McAuliffe (PPN)

Apologies:

Officials Present:

Mr. B. Kennedy (Director of Service), Mr. D. McGuigan (A/Senior Executive Officer), Ms. A. Goggin (Senior Executive Engineer), Ms. S. McDonnell (Environment Awareness Officer), Ms. S. Reidy (Senior Executive Officer), Ms. B. Quinn (Staff Officer) and Ms. A. Leahy (Clerical Officer).

Cllr. Scanlan, Chairperson, opened the meeting and welcomed the members to the first SPC of 2021.

Item 1: Adopt Minutes of Climate Action, Biodiversity and Environment Strategic Policy Committee of the 8th December 2020:

The minutes were proposed by Cllr Michael Collins, seconded by Cllr Michael Sheahan, and adopted.

Item 2: Presentation on the National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) Draft Framework - Consultation 2 (Sonja Reidy, Senior Executive Officer, Water Services)

Ms. Reidy gave a presentation and update on the National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) Draft Framework - Consultation 2.

The NWRP is Irish Water's plan to identify how they will provide a safe, sustainable, secure and reliable water supply to their customers now and into the future, whilst safeguarding the environment. The NWRP will set out how Irish Water will balance the supply and demand for drinking water over the short, medium and long term. It will be a 25-year strategy. The development of the NWRP is to take place in two phases. Phase one - the draft Framework Plan - identifies how IW will assess needs across all water supplies, and the process they will use to find solutions to address those needs. The NWRP will be based on three principles: Lose less (water conservation); Use less (education and awareness); and Supply smarter.

Irish Water is now inviting feedback on the NWRP draft Framework Plan and submissions have to be sent by Monday 1 March 2021.

Ms. Reidy concluded that LCCC will be making a submission to IW, and invited the members to make contributions as a committee or as individuals.

The members discussed the presentation and expressed their concerns around being grouped in with Dublin and the pipe line to pump water from Lough Derg to the greater Dublin area. The lack of timelines around the NWRP, and the lack of alignment with regional and national Development Plans was of huge concern to the members.

Ms. Reidy agreed that a public utility should take account to government plans and she will certainly be raising this concern in her submission.

At this point Cllr Collins (M) proposed a motion that this Committee shows its objection to the abstraction of water from the River Shannon to service water supply issues in Dublin. This motion was seconded by Cllr Secas, and supported by Ms Hayes.

Ms Reidy advised that inclusion of the motion in the submission could be premature in as much as the proposed abstraction of water from the Shannon was a separate process which would have to go through its own assessment processes. Cllr Sheahan (M) made a counter motion that this item not be included in the submission. This motion was seconded by Cllr Sheahan (J).

Cllr Sheahan (K) suggested that Cllr Collins (M) motion could be added to include a provision that "the Council's opposition would remain until the leaks in the Dublin system were dealt with."

A detailed discussion ensued regarding how to progress Cllr Collins' (M) motion. Members strongly advocated that (i) the submission would argue that Limerick would not be included in Group 4 region which included Dublin; (ii) that Limerick would argue that no water should be taken from the Shannon until such time as the leakage issues in Dublin were addressed.

Cllr B Collins advised that the presentation had been made to the Economic Development SPC on Monday last, and that Ms. Reidy was to revert to the Economic Development SPC on Monday next. A request was made of the SPC meeting to hold a joint SPC meeting with the Economic Development SPC on the NWRP Draft Framework Plan.

The Chair, Cllr Scanlan, agreed to discuss the possibility of a joint meeting of the two SPCs with his counterpart on the Economic Development SPC, Cllr Eddie Ryan, and to bring the request to the meeting of the Economic Development SPC on Monday next for consideration. Subject to a positive outcome of that discussion, a joint meeting of the Climate Action, Biodiversity and Environment SPC and Economic Development SPC could be arranged to review the submission document prior to its submission to Irish Water.

Ms Reidy agreed to include in her submission, Cllr M Collins' proposal that this Committee shows its objection to the extraction of water from the River Shannon to service water supply issues in Dublin and that efforts of IW should be concentrated in relation to repairing leaks in the existing networks in Dublin and Limerick. And the removal of Limerick from Group 4.

Mr. Kennedy agreed the submission document would be circulated to all the SPC members prior to its submission to Irish Water. He noted that documents are being finalised as part of a review of the National Development Plan and a major factor being raised is the lack of investment in IW to our sewage treatment plants.

In conclusion Ms Reidy proposed to include the following as part of the submission from the Climate Action, Biodiversity and Environment SPC:

- This Committee shows its objection to the extraction of water from the River Shannon to service water supply issues in Dublin and that the efforts of Irish Water should be concentrated in relation to repairing leaks in the existing networks in Dublin and Limerick.
- Regional Water Resource Plans should be aligned with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.
- Aim to provide a guaranteed supply of water to the towns and villages in the County of Limerick having regard to the drought conditions experienced in 2018 in East Limerick.
- Identify funding and timeframe for water supply projects noting impact on Limerick City & County Development Plan.

The members concurred with this proposal.

Item 3. Notice of Motion submitted by by Councillor S. Hartigan (Referred from the Metropolitan District Meeting held on Monday 21st December, 2020)

I will move at the next Meeting that Limerick City and County Council introduce an “Ancient Tree” scheme to encourage the planting or retention of a single community tree in all new

housing developments and suitable existing communities with the Council and community pledging to care for this individual tree until it reaches the Ancient tree category age of 400 years +.

The proposal was seconded by Cllr O'Brien.

Ms. Gabbett, supported the motion but wanted to focus on retaining trees we already have, Cllr Hartigan would also like a focus on new planning developments where the planting of trees can be identified in the planning process.

Cllr Sheahan (K) endorses the motion and added every parish in the county should have 1 acre to plant native trees and avail of professional advice. Furthermore there should be a bye law in planning to prevent planting of evergreens within 10 metres of a private dwelling house.

Cllr Hartigan later confirmed the Forestry Manual indicates the planting of trees at least 30 to 60 metres distance from a private dwelling house, but there is no regulation to how close you build a private dwelling house to the forestry.

Cllr. Secas asked if there was a register of trees, Cllr Hartigan noted this could be part of the proposed Tree Strategy.

Cllr Collins (B) spoke as chair of Tidy Towns in Adare, and confirmed that work is being carried out on a survey of trees in the area and suggested that every Tidy Towns committee could do this survey with the backing of LCCC.

Mr. Kennedy read out the reply to the Notice of Motion:

“We are currently in the process of developing a Tree Management Strategy for Limerick City and County. It is intended that the Strategy would include guidance on tree planting in new/existing developments, and consideration on the most suitable trees to plant in a particular location.

The concept of adopting a tree in a public space does not appear to be as widespread in Ireland as in other countries, for example the UK. The Tree Council in England, working through local councils and community organisations operates a tree champions and tree wardens' scheme, which engage communities in the planting and preservation of trees in their localities.

This concept is something we can explore further in the context of the development of our Tree Management Strategy.”

Mr. Kennedy advised of a pilot scheme 'Woodland Creation Scheme' which had gone out to tender. A pilot Scheme on LCCC owned land, planting of trees in woodland areas of Newcastle West and Kilmallock and we are looking for other options also.

Cllr Sheahan (K) welcomed this and added he knows of an area in Askeaton that would be suitable. It was agreed that Ms Anne Goggin would follow up with Cllr Sheahan (K) in this regard.

Cllr Hartigan welcomed the response.

Any Other Buisness

The Chair raised the matter of an e-mail circulated to all SPC members regarding the forthcoming Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) between the European Union and Canada. Mr. Hedderman proposed writing to Minister Eamon Ryan and the Tánaiste Leo Varadkar requesting that the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) be discussed fully in the Oireachtas.

This motion was seconded by Cllr Sheahan (K), and supported by Ms. Gabbutt.

Mr. Kennedy noted that this will need to go before the March full Council meeting for approval.

Cllr Collins (B) advised that she had attended a biodiversity webinar on the Queen Bumble Bee. Queen Bumble Bees come out of their hives at this time of year and their main source of food is the Dandelion and Willow blossom. On a walk of the Adare river bank recently she saw Willow being trimmed back. She asked that the trimming back of the Willow Blossom be delayed until later in the year. Cllr Hartigan supported this.

Mr. Kennedy undertook to liaise with Waterways Ireland/OPW regarding this practice.

The Chair concluded the meeting.