

Minutes of Meeting
Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee
Monday, 12th June at 9.30 a.m. in Council Chamber and via MS Teams



Present	Cllr Padraig Fleming (Chairperson) Cllr. John King Cllr. James Kelly Cllr. PJ Kelly Cllr. Ollie Clooney Ms. Ann Fingleton, Business/Commercial Mr. Bobby Delaney, Laois PPN, Environmental Rep Mr. Michael Gorman, Laois PPN, Social Inclusion Rep Ms. Ruth Sullivan, Laois PPN, Community/ Voluntary
Apologies:	Mr. Donald Scully, Agriculture/Farming
In Attendance:	Mr. Donal Brennan Director of Services Ms. Pamela Tynan, A/Senior Executive Officer Ms. Suzanne O'Connor, A/Senior Staff Officer Ms Rose Doolin, Assistant Staff Officer Ms. Suzanne Dempsey, Climate Action Co-ordinator

Cllr Padraig Fleming, Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Confirmation of Minutes

Upon the proposal of Cllr John King and seconded by Cllr James Kelly, the Minutes of the SPC Meeting held on Monday, 6th March 2023 were confirmed.

Matters Arising

Mr Bobby Delaney thanked Ms Suzanne Dempsey for the information she provided at the March SPC on the Air to Water system, which he relayed back to the community thereafter.

Community Grants Update

Ms Pamela Tynan gave an update on grants and projects administered through the Community Section to date in 2023. She delivered a presentation to members outlining the funding streams and a sample of some projects delivered by groups as a result of the funding.

Cllr Ollie Clooney raised concerns regarding the maintenance of older Cemeteries that are not in council ownership. Cllr Clooney highlighted that in some cases, no family members remain to maintain the graves and requested that the local authority take responsibility for maintenance of these graves. Mr Donal Brennan, DOS advised that from time to time Department grants are made available through the Heritage Section.

He recommended that this issue be referred to the Planning & Heritage SPC for follow-up.

Mr Bobby Delaney advised of damaged gravestones in St Josephs Cemetery in Mountmellick. It was noted that some of these graves would no longer have any relatives in Mountmellick and are in need of repair. Mr Donal Brennan, DOS advised that this issue would be investigated.

LECP 2023-2028

Ms. Pamela Tynan advised that Stage 1 of the LECP process has been completed. Stage 2, the Consultation Stage is in progress with public consultations for the 10 proposed High-Level Goals concluding on Friday 14th April. An Executive Summary has been prepared for noting by Management Team, LECP Advisory Steering Group and for approval by Laois LCDC and the Economic SPC in due course. Ms. Tynan advised that 6 in person Public Consultation Workshops combining the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), the Local Development Strategy (LDS) and the Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) were held throughout Laois during May at the following locations: Rathdowney, Mountmellick, Abbeyleix, Portarlinton, Portlaoise and Ballylinan. An additional virtual public consultation workshop was also held. In addition, an on-line survey was launched, which resulted more than 500 responses.

It is envisaged that the LECP will be presented to the full Council for adoption towards the end of 2023.

Climate Action Update

Ms Suzanne Dempsey presented members with an update on Climate Action.

- Awareness Projects & Initiatives – One to one sessions were given to 18 Tidy Town Groups. In addition, Tidy Towns Adjudicators met with Tidy Towns Committees to assist with reviewing their applications before they were submitted. 19 schools in Laois received their green flag Award and a bus was organised to transport them to a presentation in Athlone.
- Energy Awareness Campaign – An Energy Awareness Campaign was launched at the start of June. It was highlighted that Laois County Council is at the top of the table in meeting targets, to improve energy efficiency. The launch was held in the Laois County Council canteen with a staff appreciation morning for all their efforts.
- Laois Education Centre Biodiversity Demo Garden – At the Teacher training centre there is a self-guided walk of demonstrated projects that can be replicated in schools.
- Climate Change Resource Kits are available for Primary School Teachers.

- Local Authority Climate Action Plan – evidence-based reports are now complete. Consultation with staff is now complete. Public consultations were held jointly with the LECP and LDS consultations. The draft LACAP is due to be ready in September.
- Community Climate Action Fund. Two tranches of funds in the sum of €456,000 will become available shortly with a Community Climate Action Officer in place.

The members thanked Suzanne Dempsey for her presentation.

Biodiversity funding update

Ms. Pamela Tynan advised members that the funding outlined in the table below has been allocated to Laois County Council from the Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Project Type	Project Details	Grant
Biodiversity Enhancement	Project to install a demonstration biodiversity garden at Laois Education Centre, to benefit local biodiversity but primarily to act as a practical learning tool to demonstrate to teachers/ educational staff the benefits of gardening for biodiversity at their own school and provide ideas/ practical tips to develop similar projects.	€34,000
IAS Treatment	Multi-annual project to further contribute towards the achievement of favorable conservation condition of the habitats and species on the site and optimisation of the ecosystem services provided by these habitats and optimisation of the ecosystem services provided by these habitats and species through the upscaling of the invasive management processes and activities on Abbeyleix Bog.	€10,071 [€11,766 in 2024]
Biodiversity Training	The Heritage Officer /Biodiversity Officer will organise and deliver training to heighten the awareness of Biodiversity to a number of stakeholders:	€8,500
Pollinator	Pollinator Awareness - media campaign.	€6,375
Biodiversity Awareness	Biodiversity Awareness on the Portlaoise Orbital Route.	€24,088.58
	TOTAL	€83,035

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Next meeting scheduled for **Monday, 11th September, 2023 at 9.30am**

Signed: Padraig Fleming
Chair SPC

Dated: 12/9/23