

**Comhairle Contae Fine Gall
Fingal County Council**

Minutes of Climate Action, Biodiversity, Environment Strategic Policy Committee

**Tuesday, 24th June, 2025
Room 3A6, County Hall, Swords / MS Teams at 4.30pm**

PRESENT

Council Members:

Cllr Joe Newman (Chair), Cllr JK Onwumereh, Cllr Brian McDonagh, Cllr Siobhan Shovlin, Cllr Helen Redwood, Cllr David Healy.

Non-Council Members:

Tara Byrne (Env), Sarah Zimmerman (PPN)

Apologies for inability to attend were received for Paul Flynn (IFA)

The Chairperson, Councillor J. Newman, presided.

OFFICIALS PRESENT

David Storey, Director of Services; John Daly, Senior Engineer; Catherine O'Donovan, Senior Executive Officer; Patricia Cadogan, Senior Planner; Grainne Carroll, Administrative Officer; Hans Visser, Biodiversity Officer; Maria Hand, Senior Staff Officer.

CABE/7/25 (Agenda Item No 1)

**Confirmation and Re-Affirmation of Minutes of the Climate Action,
Biodiversity, Environment SPC meeting held on Tuesday 25th March 2025.**

The minutes of the meeting of the 25th March 2025 were queried by Councillor D. Healy who stated that the motion on the Development of a Lighting Policy was agreed rather than accepted. Following a discussion it was agreed by the Chair, Councillor J. Newman that the minutes were to be amended to reflect that the motion was **AGREED**. This was proposed by Councillor D. Healy and seconded by Councillor H. Redwood.

CABE/8/25 (Agenda Item No 2)

Draft Litter Management Plan Consultation Report

A presentation on the submissions received and subsequent changes and updates made to the Draft Litter Management Plan was given by Catherine O'Donovan, Senior Executive Officer, ECAATS Department.

The presentation was NOTED.

CABE/9/25 (Agenda Item No 3)

Water Action Plan - Priorities and Governance

A presentation was made by Margaret Keenan, Regional Coordinator at Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) which gave an update on the monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

The presentation was NOTED.

CABE/10/25 (Agenda Item No 4)

Community Climate Action Fund

A presentation was given by Sinéad Fox, Community Climate Action Officer detailing the themes, eligibility requirements and next steps for Community Climate Action Plan funding, which assists community projects to reduce emissions.

The presentation was NOTED.

CABE/11/25 (Agenda Item No 5)

Councillor D. Healy - Building a Zero Carbon Ireland

"That this Strategic Policy Committee invite the Irish Green Building Council to present to a meeting of this Committee or to a separate briefing organised under the aegis of the Committee in relation to their report Building A Zero Carbon Ireland <https://www.igbc.ie/building-a-zero-carbon-ireland> and enter into a discussion with them with a view to the Council developing a policy on how we can decarbonise our own construction as well as facilitating and supporting the decarbonisation of other construction in the County."

The motion, in the name of Councillor D. Healy was proposed by D. Healy and seconded by Councillor B. McDonagh.

Report:

If this Motion is passed, an invitation will issue to the Irish Green Building Council to attend a future Climate Action, Biodiversity & Environment SPC Meeting.

The Motion was AGREED.

CABE/12/25 (Agenda Item No 6)

Councillor H. Redwood - Data Centres

"In the context of the existential climate and environmental crisis and given the massive energy and water consumption that these facilities consume, this Committee calls on the Chief Executive to halt the further proliferation of data centres across the County."

The motion, in the name of Councillor H. Redwood was proposed by Councillor H. Redwood and seconded by Councillor B. McDonagh.

Report:

As stated in Appendix 7 to the Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029, a data centre is a physical facility composed of networked computers and storage that businesses and other organisations use to organise, process, store and disseminate large amounts of data.

In accordance with Section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the consideration of applications for planning permission for the construction of new data centres must have regard to a number of considerations including policies of the government or any minister that relate to proper planning and sustainable development, as well as to the provisions of the relevant Development Plan for the area.

With regard to government policy, in 2018, the government published its Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy, which was subsequently updated in 2022 (see <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/government-statement-on-the-role-of-data-centres-in-irelands-enterprise-strategy.pdf>).

The 2022 government policy statement states that data centres are core digital infrastructure and play an indispensable role in Ireland's economy and society.

This policy statement signals the government's clear preference for data centre developments that are associated with strong economic activity and

employment; make efficient use of the electricity grid, deliver renewable energy in Ireland.

It also underlines government commitment to ensuring the principles set out in the policy statement are *"effective in prioritising future data centre development that delivers strong economic benefits, sustainable energy plans, and a willingness to promote Ireland's national decarbonisation objectives through a fully supportive planning system and other regulatory regimes"*.

With regard to Development Plan policy as set out in the Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029, it should be noted that Data Centres are not permitted in the majority of land use classes and are only open for consideration in the 'GE – General Employment', 'HI – Heavy Industry' and 'HT – High Technology' land use classes.

When being considered under these land use zoning categories, data centres are considered to be 'Space Extensive Developments'. As stated in Section 4.15.3 of the Development Plan:

Space extensive developments such as large warehousing units and data centres in most instances generate low intensity employment. The Council will support these facilities at appropriate locations on a case-by case basis. These facilities should not be located on lands that are more suitable for employment intensive developments/facilities, which are close to public transport infrastructure and built-up areas where compact growth is encouraged.

Following on from the above explanatory text, the Development Plan sets out Objective DMSO92 – Space Extensive Developments as follows:

Proposals for space extensive developments such as data centres are required to address the following:

- *Energy efficiency measures for the development to reduce the carbon footprint in support of national targets towards a net zero carbon economy, including renewable energy generation.*
- *The extent of energy demand and proximity to multiple high voltage strategic grid connections with significant electricity supply capacity available, including areas with high concentration of renewable energy electricity generators.*
- *The availability of appropriate infrastructure such as high voltage electricity, fibre optic cables, water and wastewater etc. to support the use as a data centre.*

- *Measures to support the just transition to a circular economy.*
- *Measures to facilitate district heating or heat networks where excess heat is produced.*
- *High-quality design approach to buildings which reduces the massing and visual impact of same. A visual impact assessment may be required in some circumstances, depending on the specific site.*
- *Details of employment numbers once operational.*
- *Details of the levels of traffic to and from the site at construction and operation stage.*
- *Evidence of sign up to the Climate Neutral Data Centre Pact.*
- *A decommissioning report which sets out the development strategy for the site if and when the data centre is no longer in use, in order to bring the site back to a future developable state.*
- *The principles for Sustainable Data Centre Development as per the Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy (July 2022).*

Having regard to the above, and with reference to government policy as outlined previously, it is not considered appropriate or practicable to implement a halt on a specific category of private development which is provided for by government policy and by planning and development legislation.

However, in its function as planning authority, Fingal County Council will continue to ensure that all new applications for data centres are assessed in accordance with all relevant government policy and Development Plan Guidelines.

The report was given by Patricia Cadogan, Senior Planner, Planning & Strategic Infrastructure and a discussion followed with the Members.

The Motion was AGREED.

CABE/13/25 (Agenda Item No 7)

Councillor J. Newman - Forest of Fingal Policy Update

“That the Chief Executive provide an update on the Forest of Fingal Policy, detailing if there has been a low uptake of Nature based solutions in terms of the Climate Action Plan metrics and specifically indicate the progress with targets in the policy, relating to the increase of tree canopy cover, including a description of their medium term plans for: Reference 5.11 Annual Net Increase in Tree Canopy Cover, Forest of Fingal.”

The motion, in the name of Councillor J. Newman was proposed by J. Newman and seconded by Councillor H. Redwood.

Report:

1.72 Hectares of new woodland have been planted in Newbridge Demesne as part of the implementation of the woodland plan for that site.

Planting licences for two woodland planting areas at Ardgillan Castle and the Nevitt (10ha) have been submitted to the Forest Service. The Ardgillan application has been successful and the result of application at the Nevitt is still awaited.

90 acres of farmland have been acquired adjacent to St Catherines Park near Lucan to facilitate the extension of the ancient woodlands there. It is envisaged that these new woodland areas will be developed over the next 10 years through community tree planting events and some natural colonisation.

Hans Visser answered questions regarding the report. Councillor J. Newman requested that a headed item be brought to a future SPC meeting.

The report was ACCEPTED.

CABE/14/25 (Agenda Item No 8)

S. Zimmermann - Digital Communications Plan for Towns

"That the Chief Executive reports on what digital communications plan for towns noted in actions within the Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan and Fingal County Council's Climate Action Plan are in place or being introduced, to inform the community of noted actions to increase awareness."

The motion, in the name of S. Zimmerman was proposed by S. Zimmerman and seconded by Councillor D. Healy.

Report:

Fingal County Council published the Annual Report on the Progress of the Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 on Fingal County Council website. This report details actions taken by Fingal County Council on the implementation of the Local Authority Climate Action Plan. The 2024 report can be seen here:

www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2025-05/final-fcc-climate-action-plan-progress-report-march-2025.pdf

Fingal County Council have developed a Story Map which details the climate actions taken by the various departments within Fingal. The story map can be viewed here: <https://www.fingal.ie/ClimateAction>

All actions such as Dublin Climate Action Week or the Reusable Cup Campaign are promoted on the Fingal County Council social media platforms.

The report was given by Catherine O'Donovan, Senior Executive Officer and discussions with Members followed.

The report was ACCEPTED.

The Meeting concluded at 18:27.

CHAIRPERSON

DATED