



Senior Executive Officer
Environment, Water and Climate Change Department,
South Dublin County Council
County Hall
Tallaght
Dublin 24

March 25th 2019

Ref: South Dublin County Council Draft Climate Change Action Plan 2019 - 2024

Congratulations to South Dublin County Council's Environment, Water and Climate Change Department, on an ambitious Climate Change Action Plan and a hugely successful and engaging launch in County Hall.

I'm delighted that the four Dublin Local Authorities have come together to put in place an Action Plan that helps us enact action plans to tackle and mitigate climate change.

Dublin's climate is changing, we saw that during Storm Emma and the 2018 Heat Wave. Those changes pose significant risks and challenges from rising water levels and flooding, to water shortages and drought. It is our responsibility as Local Authorities to take a leadership role and work to mitigate those challenges and to work to stop climate change in its tracks.

I'm pleased to see this plan set out how we, as a County, can improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our own buildings and across our functions and operations. Doing this will make Dublin more adaptive to the current and future impacts of climate change.

I believe that the commitments made in the Plan are a huge step in the right direction and welcome plans to achieve:

- A 33% increase in better energy use by the Council by 2020
- A 40% reduction in the Council's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030
- A climate resilient Dublin, by reducing the impacts of future climate change-related events
- Engagement from Dublin's citizens on the topic of climate change

I welcome the commitments made in terms of energy, transport, flood resilience, nature-based solutions and resource management but would like to see some of the policies we have adopted both in local and national Government included in the Plan. Specifically, I would ask for the below to be added:

- A commitment to electrifying our rail lines through Lucan, Clondalkin and Hazelhatch
- A vision to transform our canals' towpath's into cycle and pedestrian greenways
- A clear commitment to protect natural amenities such as the Liffey Valley, the Camac Valley, the Saggart and Newcastle hills and Slade Valley, and the Woodlands Area adjacent to Rathcoole Park and to enhance them through the creation of walking trails
- Measures to reduce waste in the River Liffey, Royal and Grand Canal

The Action Plan should also include a commitment to implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and to include specific measures that help us reach the EU's 2030 emission targets.

As a Council we need to put in place a comprehensive plan to engage with our citizens in order to promote the incentives and energy efficiency benefits of retrofitting buildings. This engagement should also include ongoing support for the Climate Ambassador Programme.

We should also work with all Local Authorities and the Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources to introduce smart grids to distribute variable energy supplies.

Difficult trees which need to be removed should be replaced one for one in the overall area, but in a more appropriate location if those trees were not in the right place. The Council should invest in a machine that removes tree-stumps in order to do this in an efficient manner, as leaving the tree stumps for a number of months is not satisfactory from either an aesthetic perspective or a climate change perspective.

Fairy trails should be rolled out in all parks in order to encourage children to walk through trees and learn to appreciate them. These trails should include the names of the species of trees to develop an awareness of them.

Pollinators, such as bees, play an essential role in our ecosystems, but are undergoing serious population declines both in Ireland and globally. Bees are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as flowering times are affected and this can lead to a timing mis-match between when bees emerge from hibernation and when their food source pollen is available. Wildflowers that allow for pollination and attract bees should be sowed along all new roads that are deemed appropriate, for example the new section of the Newcastle Road between Newcastle and Lucan should be used in this way. This should also be a consideration for planned roads servicing Clonburris. Our Plan should include a commitment to ensure that a section in each of our parks are planted like this with a view to creating a wildflower sections in each public park.

The Plan should also make provision for Council community grants that support the development of community gardens, bird and bat boxes at appropriate locations and rain gardens. The Council should include a commitment to collaborate with Tidy Towns Groups to incentivize the installation of greenery in public spaces.

The Plan should also include a specific commitment to retain hedgerows and scrubland as we continue to develop our County.

South Dublin County Council arranges regular WEE Collections and should commit to a calendar of these as part of the Action Plan.

As an employer the Council should investigate the possibility of arranging a Car Pooling system and rewarding those who car pool with designated 'green' carparking spaces at the building and close to the door. To incentivize the use of keep-cups the Council should offer a discount to everyone who brings a re-usable cup to the coffee shop when purchasing a cup of tea or coffee. These could be measures included in the Action Plan also.

Congratulations again on taking such a leading role on a critically important topic. I hope some of my comments will be used to help shape the plan.

Many thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Emer".

Cllr. Emer Higgins

Glenaraneen

Brittas

Co. Dublin