

CASE STUDIES ON GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Wexford County Council and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCA) recently hosted the GPP4Growth project partners in Wexford to showcase local and national case studies of green public procurement, and to learn how public money can improve our local environment. Report by Dr Irene Cadogan, Executive Officer at the Department's Waste Policy and Resource Efficiency Division in Wexford.

The GPP4Growth Interreg project brings together partners from nine countries, to exchange experiences and practices and improve their capacities on implementing resource efficiency policies that promote eco-innovation and green growth through Green Public Procurement (GPP).

Running until 2021, the project aims to:

- Increase the capacity of regional administrations to effectively implement resource efficiency policies, applying green public procurement.
- Improve the implementation of national/regional resource efficiency policies, providing incentives to businesses to integrate environmental factors and costs when producing goods and/or providing supplies, services and works.
- Unlock regional/national investments on green public procurement to promote the development of new green products and services.
- Improve regional actors' readiness and create knowledge awareness on the influence of green public procurement on the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns by businesses operating in the region.

During the 'experience visit' the partners took in two days of activities that included workshop sessions and practical demonstrations of green procurement projects. Wexford County Council has recently agreed to work with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment as a champion of green public procurement (GPP).

To date, this collaboration has shown that many of the purchasing decisions made by the local authorities are providing good examples of green public procurement.

CASE STUDIES

Three case studies presented to the project partners addressed street lighting conversion, social housing upgrades and the design



GPP4Growth Partners pictured outside Wexford Garda Divisional Headquarters, during their trip to Wexford, with Wexford County Council staff members.

of flood defence works in Enniscorthy.

1: Street Lighting LED Conversion

In Wexford County 14,575 street lights, under the remit of the Council, cost over €1 million per year in operating and maintenance costs. In response to national energy efficiency targets, increasing energy costs, high maintenance costs, obsolete equipment and poor lighting quality the Council decided to upgrade the bulbs to LED.

To date 3,430 bulbs have been replaced reducing the maintenance costs by 87% per annum and reducing energy use by up to 70%. The Council will continue to replace approximately 2,500 bulbs per year until 2021.

2: Social Housing Energy Efficiency Upgrade

The Council renovated a small estate of 12 one-bed houses within Wexford Town. The energy performance of these houses was extremely poor; energy costs were very high and the health

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GPP4Growth partners pictured with staff from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) at Wexford County Hall.

of tenants was at risk of being adversely affected.

With the help of 50% grant-aid from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) these houses received a deep retrofit; internal and external insulation, heat pump, solar PV panels, demand controlled ventilation and new windows and doors.

At the end of the project all properties had received an 'A' level energy performance certificate. After grant aid, improvements cost the council €12,500 per unit. While energy costs have significantly decreased there were other significant benefits such as reduced maintenance, better air quality and health outcomes. As a result of these improvements the properties have become much sought after within the area by social housing tenants.

3: Design of Flood Defence Works

The town of Enniscorthy, located on the banks of the River Slaney in Wexford, has a long history of flooding. Extreme floods occurred in 1924, 1947, 1965 and 2000, and more recently in 2015.

Flooding has resulted in inundation of properties and roads in the town and represents a risk to the health and safety of its inhabitants, causing property damage and traffic disruption and adversely affecting commercial activity in the town and its environs.

The Office of Public Works (OPW), in conjunction with Wexford County Council, undertook a study of the flooding problem, following which a preliminary design for the Enniscorthy Flood Defence Scheme was exhibited for public consultation in 2009.

In response to feedback received, the initial designs were altered to improve bio-diversity and ecology issues within the design. This included tree planting, a nesting wall, re-design of the bridge to reduce impact on flight path of birds, fish refuges, spawning areas, habitat creation and the construction process has been designed to reduce impact on fish and lamprey migration. The project will cost in the region of €45 million and has gone to tender.

GREEN PROJECT INVESTMENT

The case studies demonstrated that greener purchasing decisions can result in significant long run savings for local authorities. Designing and delivering green projects can be an investment in the long-term health and prosperity of a locality and does not always cost more.

The experience has encouraged Wexford County Council to do more. Feedback from the GPP4Growth project partners was very positive and the learning from this trip will feed into the outputs of the project as well as the next 'experience visit' due to take place in Antwerp next year.

Bernie Kiely from the Department's Waste Policy and Resource Efficiency Division said: "it was great for us to be able to bring the GPP4Growth partners

to Wexford and share our story about implementing GPP. Local authorities need to get recognition for the work they are already doing and senior level support to help them do more."

PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATIONS

Speaking after the two-day visit of the GPP4Growth project partners to Wexford, Wexford Country Council's Chief Executive Tom Enright described the event as a "welcome opportunity for the Council to demonstrate in a very practical way the manner in which green procurement practices can yield substantial rewards for a contracting local authority".

He thanked the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment for their championing of GPP, stating: "Wexford Council will continue to pursue all opportunities to integrate environmental factors and costs when procuring goods and services into the future – not only does this make environmental sense, but as we have shown here in Wexford, it also makes financial sense".

