

ROYAL COUNTY ROLLS OUT CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY

Meath County Council is one of the first local authorities in Ireland to adopt its own Climate Action Strategy, following a united decision taken by the council and elected members in 2016 to focus on the opportunities which climate change may bring.

Recent extreme and catastrophic weather trends across the globe leaves us in no doubt as to the damage caused by humans to our way of life and health. So, we are now in a climate emergency, and Ireland is not immune.

Storm Lorenzo in early October was the first Category 5 hurricane that reached so far north and east in the Atlantic Ocean. The reason for this is simple — the hurricane was caused by our oceans heating up. However, could this worrying new record now become the norm?

Meath County Council recently adopted its own Climate Action Strategy, three years after the start of the process when it was then recognised in 2016 that climate change was becoming a serious issue.

So, therefore, from the inception of the project, a conscious decision was made to focus on the opportunities which climate change may bring, and hence it became the council's mission statement 'To make Meath a climate ready region that supports jobs, growth and healthy lifestyles'.

A Climate and Biodiversity Emergency was declared at the July 2019 meeting of Meath County Council. The Climate Action Team decided to treat the emergency situation as such and responded by organising climate action training for the elected members two weeks after the emergency was declared.

CLIMATE ACTION FORUM

Raoul Empey, who trained under Al Gore, takes a personal approach to climate action training, and questions how the individual may be part of the solution.

The training stimulated many ideas on how Meath County Council and elected members could dynamically promote climate action and behavioural change.

However, the key output from the training was the creation of a Climate Action Forum, which is run by the elected members



Climate Action Forum Chairperson Cllr David Gilroy, Jackie Maguire, Chief Executive of Meath County Council, and Cathaoirleach Cllr Wayne Harding pictured (centre) with members of Meath County Council's Climate Action Team, at the official launch of the Climate Action Strategy in September.

and facilitated by the Climate Action Team.

Cllr David Gilroy, Chairperson of the Climate Action Forum, commented; "By working with the councillors we're essentially working and communicating directly with many communities across the county, which the dialogue has afforded by such collaboration. This ensures that our Climate Action Strategy can be more fully delivered.

"Cross-party and county-wide representation demonstrates our commitment to engaging with our communities to answer the call to action, which Meath County Council's Climate Change Emergency Declaration demands."

Meath County Council has become one of the first local authorities in the country to provide training for staff members. On adoption of the Climate Action Strategy on 2 September,



Starting the Climate Action Conversation – Meath County Council’s Project Assistant Alan Owens, Environmental Technician Peter Olwell, Senior Executive Engineer Caroline Corrigan, who are members of the Climate Action Team.

work started immediately to roll out a series of Climate Action Roadshows, in each Municipal District.

These Climate Action Roadshows showcased energy-efficient and climate-friendly products and services by local suppliers. The message essentially was twofold – firstly, buying local is one of the best things a person can do for climate change, and secondly, every climate action counts, no matter how small.

“Meeting people at these events highlighted the work being done by individuals on the ground and within their communities,” noted Caroline Corrigan, Meath County Council’s Senior Executive Engineer.

#MEATHCLIMATEMATTERS CAMPAIGN

“We realised that these change makers should be recognised and celebrated for their work and from this came our #MeathClimateMatters Champions campaign. We want to tell their story and inspire others to start a climate conversation,” she added.

Ms Corrigan also stated that language, imagery and storytelling are important in portraying the council’s message. “We often use words like ‘crisis’ and ‘emergency’ when talking about climate change, so to portray the sense of urgency and images are also important. They can be inspiring, thought-provoking, disturbing and can sometimes convey a message, which words cannot do.”

Finally, storytelling is key in talking about climate emergency and to inspire people into behavioural changes that promote climate positive actions. “We can make stories personal and engaging, they can pass easily from person to person,” according

COUNCIL ROLLS OUT CLIMATE ACTION ROADSHOWS

On adoption of the Climate Action Strategy on 2 September, Meath County Council rolled out a series of Climate Action Roadshows in each Municipal District across the county, starting with the first roadshow in Navan on 16 September.

Other events took place in Trim (17 September), Kells (19 September) Bettystown (24 September), Ashbourne (26 September), and Ratoath (1 October). The second roadshow in Navan, which was scheduled to take place at Buvinda House on 3 October, was postponed due to Storm Lorenzo.

With a new date for Navan yet to be confirmed, Meath County Council also plans to run a number of other roadshows across the county.



The roadshow in Kells on 19 September took place in the Headfort Hotel.



Members of the Climate Action Team pictured at the roadshow in Knightsbrook Hotel in Trim on 17 September.

to Meath County Council’s Senior Executive Engineer.

So, having started its own climate action story, Meath County Council hopes that many other local authorities will join the county on this journey.