**Minutes from Meeting of Climate, Biodiversity Action & Environment SPC**

**Tuesday, 13th July 2021, 10.00am – Held remotely on Microsoft Teams.**

**Present: Cllr. Philip Brady, Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Madeline Argue, Cllr. Winston Bennett, Cllr. T.P. O’Reilly, Cllr. Shane P O’Reilly, Fintan McCabe, Barry Wilson, Paddy Connaughton DOS, Colm O’Callaghan, Jim Lyng, Bróna Keating, Allison Treanor, Tim Conroy, Fingleton White, Kevin Fortune, Fingleton White**

Cllr. Philip Brady calls the Meeting to order.

**Minutes of meeting dated 29th March, 2021**

Proposed by Cllr. Madeline Argue and seconded by Cllr. T.P. O’Reilly.

**Presentation by energy consultants, Fingleton White on Anaerobic Digestion feasibility study currently underway in Cavan Monaghan region**

Bróna Keating introduced Tim Conroy and Kevin Fortune from Fingleton White, energy consultants who are currently undertaking a feasibility study on behalf of Gas Networks Ireland and the industrial sector to identify potential for energy generation, decarbonisation and waste recycling.

They provided a presentation assessing the potential of anaerobic digestion in the food/agri sector in the Cavan/Monaghan region.

Fingleton White have expertise with biomethane and have assisted the development of a centralised injection facility in Mitchelstown, Co. Cork and the Cush gas injection facility in Co. Kildare.

The scope of their work involves:

* Feedstock analysis - cattle/pig/poultries slurries, brown bin waste, dairy processing waste, grass silage, etc.
* Model development – evaluate plant performance, high level assessment of feedstock, identify most promising AD options, specify sites with most potential, identifying most suitable feedstock per site, etc.
* Conceptual plant design, site location assessment, financial assessment and project programme for development.

A detailed final report will be provided outlining the characteristics of the feedstock available, a conceptual design for the proposed solution, financial assessment and recommendations for further development which will allow stakeholders to be proactive in their efforts to decarbonise their production activities while generating a renewable energy.

After the presentation concluded, the floor opened for questions.

Bróna Keating: Would AD plans need to include other waste streams?

*To generate energy efficiently, other waste materials i.e. grass silage or manure with a high straw content with also be needed.*

Paddy Connaughton: When will the report be completed?

*The expected timeframe is 6 months. The study commenced in May 2021, so it is expected to be available in October/November 2021.*

Will the document be available to the public?

*Yes*

Will there be a number of AD plants or just one location?

*The most attractive locations will be considered. It is expected that a number of locations would be selected and proximity to each other will be taken into consideration.*

As a Local Authority/SPC what assistance can they provide to tackle any obstacles anticipated in getting the technology across the line?

*Potential barriers include planning applications, waste licences, waster discharge licences. The potential barriers would be reported to the LA/SPC at a later date.*

Fintan McCabe: Will there be competition for feedstock?

*It is anticipated that excess grass silage will be used. The Renewable Energy Directive would prevent the transportation of materials such as maize. Any costs of materials would need to be factored in.*

T.P. O’Reilly: In terms of cost, will the project be dependant on tariffs? Would cooperatives be viable?

*Yes, future projects will be dependant on financial supports. Ownership details will be examined at a later stage.*

**EPA approach to the assessment of cumulative impacts of ammonia emissions from the intensive agriculture sector**

Presentation from Allison Treanor.

In May 2021, the EPA issued a letter to the Secretary General of DHLGH highlighting developments to licencing of IAE’s which will have impacts for installations in the Cavan/Monaghan region. Any future plans/projects that are likely to have a significant effect on Natura sites either on its own or in combination with other plans/projects is to be authorised only if it will not adversely affect the integrity of that site.

The EPA commissioned an investigation which assessed the cumulative impact of ammonia emissions from IAEs (above and below the licencing threshold) on 3 No. Natura 2000 sites in the Cavan/Monaghan region (Lough Oughter).

The key finding was the 3 Natura Sites experience an exceedance of their critical levels of ammonia and critical load for nutrient nitrogen over part or all of the designated sites as a result of the cumulative impact of ammonia emissions. This has a significant impact for IED licencing of new and existing installation within a 10 km radius of these Natura sites.

Ammonia emissions from agriculture is responsible for 99% of national emissions of ammonia. The EPA licenced sector represents 10% of natural ammonia emissions.

In the Cavan/Monaghan region there are over 115 No. EPA licenced installations and 24 new/review applications on hand in the pig and poultry sector – ratio of 80:20 Monaghan/Cavan.

Implications for Cavan:

* No new licences would be issued until overall background levels of ammonia and nitrogen deposition reduces.
* Investment in new technologies and abatement would be required for expansion of existing facilities. No increase of emissions allowed.

Allison opened the floor for questions:

Paddy Connaughton DOS informed the meeting that the area affected stretched from Lough Gowna to Redhills, Swanlinbar and New Inns.

Barry Wilson: What is the ratio of licenced/unlicenced facilities?

*Allison reviewed the maps on the presentation and distinguished the licenced/unlicenced facilities.*

Fintan McCabe: How are the depositions measured?

*Modelled on air monitoring stations across the region and Northern Ireland.*

**Update on national working group re domestic WWTS**

Update provided by Paddy Connaughton, DOS.

The working group has been set up. Focusing on areas where soil conditions would prevent new development under the CoP (Leitrim and West Cavan). Also examining the use of discharge licences where soil cannot be treated. A further update will be provided when available.

**AOB**

No other business arose and the meeting concludes.

**Date of next meeting**

The date of the next SPC meeting will be circulated to all members at a later date.