

‘Lady’s Island Lake is dying after 40 years of inaction’

Campaign group vow to keep pressure on to ensure the lake is saved

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Ahead of a recent public meeting, the Save Lady’s Island Lake campaign group trawled the archives. With the an extremely unique habitat described as being on the verge of collapse in the midst of what is being dubbed “an environmental disaster”, they wondered just how things had gotten so bad.

Their research showed that over forty years ago, in June of 1983, *The Wexford People* reported that Lady’s Island Lake was “almost a cess pool” and that the amenity was “being shamelessly destroyed by pollution”.

Over forty years after local media first reported on pollution in Lady’s Island Lake, the situation has deteriorated even further and immediate action is required to prevent the imminent death of the lake.

It’s a story local naturalist and an oracle on the topic Jim Hurley knows all too well. He’s issued numerous warnings going back decades and at a recent meeting at Lady’s Island Community Centre, he spoke on it again.

He pointed to twelve pollution reports commissioned by Wexford County following the 1983 press coverage, covering a period from 1984 to 2006.

The 1984 report found that the lake was polluted and that several of the twelve feeder streams were polluted, two of them badly.

Further monitoring was conducted and a further ten reports were published between 1990 and 2006. Several of these reports contained recommendations of the specific actions required to improve water quality in the lake and its feeder streams. It was stated that Wexford County Council ceased commissioning reports in 2006.

It was in 2019 that the EPA commissioned the most recent report, published earlier this year, which found that the situation is dire and one of the country’s most unique ecosystems is in danger of collapse “due to excessive inputs of nitrogen and phosphorus from agriculture”.

An EPA summary of the re-

port states clearly that “the results of our research show that no improvement in the lake’s ecology will be possible without a large reduction in nutrient run-off from land. Some amelioration may be possible by protecting the lake shoreline by tree planting, the use of artificial wetlands and the removal of nutrient rich sediments. Inevitably, society must address the conflict between the overuse of nutrients such as nitrogen and the impact this is having on our water resources”.

A spokesperson for Save Lady’s Island Lake, Peadar McDonald says that now is the time for action and that years of dragging heels has led us to the current ecological crisis.

“Forty years of inaction is too much and we are almost out of time to save the lake,” he said. “Jim addressed a group of concerned citizens last Thursday and outlined the urgency of the matter.

“This is not a new issue as can be seen via the research done over the past forty years. We are calling on Wexford County Council and national bodies responsible for the health of the lake to act now before it is too late.”