



The closed off pilgrimage path at Lady's Island, Co Wexford, where nearly 60 swans are suspected to have died from bird flu in the past two weeks.

57 swans wiped out after bird flu outbreak at Lady's Island

Department of Agriculture is monitoring the situation

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The remains of nearly 60 swans have been removed from various points along the shore of a beloved Wexford beauty spot over the past couple of weeks, as an outbreak of avian flu has been confirmed.

Two weeks ago, the death toll of local swans stood at ten and the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Department of Agriculture were carrying out all the required testing.

In the interim, the picturesque pilgrimage path was closed to the public as Wexford County Council workers patrolled the shores of the lake and traversed it by boat, removing the remains of the unfortunate swans who had succumbed to the deadly bird flu.

Local councillor and Lady's Island resident Ger Carthy said that the test results were definitive on the cause of death.

"I've had confirmation from the Senior Superintendent Veterinary Inspector in the Department of Agriculture that it's bird flu," he said.

"Over the past two and a half weeks, 57 dead swans have been discovered here in Lady's Island. I want to commend the Environment Section of Wexford Coun-

ty Council for the work they've done on this, in closing off the path and collecting the remains of the poor birds."

With the swans being wild birds, Cllr Carthy says that there's an element of responsibility falling between the stools and, to a degree, the authorities are standing back and allowing nature to take its course.

"The Department of Agriculture say that these are wild birds. They only have jurisdiction when it's commercial flocks, like we've seen elsewhere. It seems the approach that's being taken is not to intervene and to just monitor the situation, but it's sad to see this happen to our swans, which are synonymous with the local area here.

"On one occasion, two of the swans wandered from the lake into a local housing estate before they died. It's upsetting for people to see them in that state."

Cllr Carthy estimates that Lady's Island is home to around 200 swans, meaning the 57 lost is a significant dent in the population there.

With the numbers of dead swans being discovered seemingly starting to slow, Cllr Carthy says that the popular walking trail will re-open to the public in the coming days. However, if anyone happens across any further dead birds, they are advised not to pick them up or touch them and to contact the local authorities right away.

Human infections with avian influenza are rare and the risk to the health of the public is considered to be very low.