Save Our Lady's Island Lake group invited to attend meeting

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Although it doesn't have an official role in the preservation of the lake, the Save Our Lady's Island Lake campaign group has been invited to make a presentation at the October meeting of the Rosslare Municipal District (RMD).

In an email sent to district manager Ann Marie Laffan, the group requested that they be permitted to attend the meeting as they "are very concerned about the ongoing pollution of Our Lady's Island lake".

"The group is focused on initially gathering support for urgent action to substantially reduce the level of pollution and the eventual restoration of the lake to a healthy ecological condition for the benefit of everyone," the email stated.

While not fundamentally opposed to the group making a presentation, Councillor Ger Carthy, who is from Our Lady's Island, was slightly baffled by the request.

"Have they just decided they're going to be crusaders for Our Lady's Island lake?" he asked. "The Taoiseach has taken an interest in the lake, the Housing Minister James Browne has allocated €700,000 in funding to address the issues there; there's a scientist, two admin staff, and an office set up, there are scanners in the lake, there's a plan in place, so I'm just wondering what's their agenda?"

At an event held in the community centre in Our Lady's Island last November, Minister Browne confirmed that this first tranche of funding will set in motion "serious improvements" to a body of water which has previously been described as "an ecological disaster" by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

That funding is being used to support the development of a Water Quality Management Plan for Our Lady's Island with measures to address excess nutrients from agriculture, domestic waste water treatment plants (septic tanks) and urban waste water treatment plant(s) entering the lake

Arguing that he is fully aware of the issues at the lake having lived in the community all of his life, Cllr Carthy was not impressed by the Save Our Lady's Island Lake group's request.

"A permanent drainage solution has planning and ministerial consent, so is this just a bit of a chit-chat because they have no status?" he asked. "Are we going to let anyone in here who wants to talk about things?"

With the encouragement of Cathaoirleach Frank Staples, who noted that the only way to find out the group's status was to approve the invite, the request was eventually approved by councillors.

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