



Comhairle Contae Loch Garman

Wexford County Council

To	Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine.
From	Wexford County Council
Date	November 2025
Subject	Business Case: Resources

1. Executive Summary

Following evaluation of the original Business Case by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, a reviewed Business Case is submitted. This business case supports the recruitment of additional resources to manage the long-term restoration of Lady's Island Lake as per recommendations of Dail Eireann's, Joint Committee on Climate, Environment and Energy on examination of CLEAR Report on Lady's Island Lake, July 2025; and to support the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and Ireland's Water Action Plan. The following additional resources are required to ensure the efficient implementation of the Lady's Island Project:

- Executive Agricultural Scientist/Project Manager
- Clerical officer
- Water Quality Management Plan Scoping Study
- Ground Water Scoping Study
- Regular monitoring of all feeder streams, surface water inputs and lake for nutrients, salinity and other relevant indications.
- Liaison with all farming enterprises, domestic treatment plant owners and Uisce Éireann.

In the Joint Committee on Climate, Environment and Energy Report it is recommended that Wexford County Council leads the long-term restoration of Lady's Island Lake with the full support of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Wexford County Council understands from the report that it is tasked to lead a multi-body restoration project so that a clear and specific mandate to restore Lady's Island Lake would be undertaken. The various bodies involved are the EPA; the NPWS; LAWPRO; Teagasc and Uisce Éireann, as well as external bodies such as IFA, ICMSA, Lady's Island Drainage Committee, Tirlan, Strathroy, working with local landowners and property owners.

Wexford County Council, taking inspiration from the success of its Duncannon EIP and the expertise it has gained in running Duncannon EIP project is aware of the need for resources to manage the scale, complexity, and quality requirements of the project. In addition, an initial desk study has been carried out that identified data gaps which will require further investigation to ensure accurate targeting of measures in the catchment. *'Lady's Island Lake Water Quality Project Plan: Overview with Recommended Actions (Daly, Sept 2025)'*.

The cost associated with the Water Quality Management Plan Scoping, and Phase 1 of the Ground Water Scoping studies is initially €31,640, both of which will be completed by year end of 2025 or early 2026.

The additional resources required, to ensure efficient implementation of the project are summarised in Table 1 below. Further details of resources are included in section 4 below.

Table 1 – projected project costs

Expenditure Headings	Annual Costs for Resources					
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Senior Ex. Ag. Sc		€79,090	€81,515	€82,676	€85,117	€87,578
Clerical officer		€31,119	€32,868	€33,302	€34,174	€35,452
Travel & Subsistence		€18,155	€18,155	€18,155	€18,155	€18,155
WQ Management Plan Scoping Study	€ 11,070	€11,070				
Ground Water Scoping Study Hydrological Assessment	€ 9,500					
Total	€ 20,570	€139,434	€132,538	€134,133	€137,446	€141,185
Total					€ 705,306	

2. Background

Lady's Island Lake is located in the southeast of Wexford, Ireland and is comprised of a shallow, brackish coastal lagoon separated from the sea by a sand and shingle barrier. This site is of high international conservation importance, having three habitats which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive and one of these (lagoons) with priority status. The lake is possibly the best remaining example in Europe of a distinct and relatively rare geomorphological formation.

Lady's Island has been identified in the 3rd cycle River Basin Management Plan as a Priority Area for Action. As outlined in the LAWPRO referral report for Lady's Island, the Lady's Island Lake is currently Poor Status (2016-2021) and has been Poor or Bad Status since 2010-2012, see Table below. The Environmental Protection Agency have determined that Lady's Island Lake is *At Risk* of not meeting the Water Framework Directive water quality objective of Good Ecological Status. LAWPRO have carried out a catchment assessment to identify significant pressures on water quality in the area and to help target actions in the area.

The National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) state in their most recent coastal lagoon survey that Lady's Island Lake, is one of the most heavily impacted sites in the country in terms of water pollution, eutrophication, as well as poor water level management regimes applied to the lakes. In 2004 Lady's Island lagoon was classified as hypereutrophic, with chlorophyll A levels in the lake of 202-243 mg/m³, resulting in algal blooms, fish kills and severe reduction in benthic vegetation. Since then, large areas of lagoonal macrophytes have disappeared.

In general, the main sources of enrichment identified are,

- agriculture,
- municipal waste-water treatment plants and
- on-site waste-water treatment plants which are not operating correctly.

Table 2 Wexford Coastal Lagoons PAA water bodies Ecological Status

Water body Name	Type	Risk (3 rd Cycle)	Status Objective	Ecological Status			
				2010-2012	2010-2015	2013-2018	2016-2021
Kisha_010	River	<i>Review</i>	Good	Unassigned	Unassigned	Moderate	Moderate
Lady's Island Lake	Transitional	<i>At Risk</i>	Good	Poor	Bad	Poor	Poor
Grogan Burrow_010	River	<i>Review</i>	Good	Unassigned	Unassigned	Moderate	Moderate
Tacumshin Lake	Transitional	<i>At Risk</i>	Good	Poor	Moderate	Poor	Poor

3. Project Outline

Given that Lady's Island is a Priority Area for Action under the existing Water Action Plan (WAP) all mechanisms for undertaking scientific and compliance investigations, delivery of advice and implementing regulatory and supplementary measures will be required. This will involve very close engagement between Wexford County Council as the project lead, LAWPRO, Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP), NPWS and Farming for Water (FFW) EIP.

Lady's Island Lake is severely degraded due to excess inputs of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus), with nitrogen being marked out as the limiting nutrient in the brackish waters of Lady's Island Lagoon and sediment (Dr Cillian Roden, pers com). Monitoring and assessment carried out by the EPA and LAWPRO have identified agriculture as a significant pressure on water quality in the area. In addition, the EPA-funded CLEAR report indicated that Lady's Island Lake will require a significant reduction of nutrient inputs to the lagoon, particularly from agricultural source inputs to achieve WFD objectives and conservation objectives.

Wexford County Council will lead the project in Lady's Island to deliver a coordinated approach to achieving compliance with environmental legislation and the provision of support for supplementary measures across all pressures: agriculture, domestic wastewater treatment plants and urban wastewater treatment plant(s) in the catchment area. The project plan will include the following elements at a minimum:

- Firstly, the gathering of additional data regarding the pathways and transport of nutrients in the catchment, thus bridging a number of data gaps in the knowledge of nutrient movements. This will involve producing a hydrological assessment of the drainage area.
- The drawing together of an overall Water Quality Management Plan taking into account the objectives for attaining good water quality status, the needs of the various stakeholders, of the farming and local community and the existing and newly compiled data on the sources and transport of nitrogen and phosphorus in the catchment.
- The development of an overall Communication Plan. This will involve engagement with stakeholders including farmers, local community and relevant organisations.

- Compliance assessment.
- Harnessing existing schemes to implement measures, while in parallel undertaking further scientific assessments to underpin the development of bespoke measures and funding mechanisms.

Additional resources set out in this proposal are essential to effectively coordinate and deliver the project. As agriculture has been identified as a significant pressure, it will be critical that the proposed Project Manager/Sustainability Agricultural Advisor and Administrative support personnel are put in place to deliver the project and to liaise closely with the farming community in the area, ASSAP and the FFW EIP to deliver targeted actions. Measures implemented as part of this project will be targeted using the catchment science approach and will be funded through existing schemes e.g. the FFW EIP which can fund listed measures under the project or agreed bespoke measures specific to the area, that will deliver water quality improvements. The proposed Project Manager/Sustainability Agricultural Advisor will be critical in working with farmers to agree targeted measures at field level.

4. Resource Requirements

Resource Requirement 1

Role and duration: Project Manager/Sustainability Agricultural Advisor (i.e. Senior Executive Scientist/Agricultural Advisor) for 5 years. This person will be recruited by Wexford County Council and will be based in the Wexford County Council offices in Carricklawn and at an office in the Lady's Island Community Centre.

Key Tasks:

1. Liaising with key stakeholders to ensure a coordinated approach to compliance assurance and the implementation of appropriate supplementary measures to improve water quality in the area.
2. Ensuring all participant farmers are working to an up-to-date best practice NMP.
3. Advising farmers on how they could improve efficiencies across the farm, particularly nutrient efficiencies.
4. Design and assist in the implementation of additional farmyard and field measures which are found to be of assistance in both reducing nutrient use on the farm and in ensuring that nutrients which are applied are utilised and do not migrate to watercourses and the lake.
5. Helping farmers to avail of existing funding scheme sources such as ACRES (or equivalent), Farming for Water EIP funding and the Native Woodland Scheme for example, where these can help address mitigation of risks to water quality.
6. Sampling and regular reporting.

Resource Requirement 2

Role and duration: Clerical Officer for 5 years. This person will be recruited by Wexford County Council and will be based in the Wexford County Council offices in Carricklawn and on site in Lady's Island when required.

Key Tasks:

- I. Keep all files on participant farmers up to date.
- II. Maintenance of register, uploading to a public website monthly.
- III. Compliance/ Non-compliance paperwork and log maintenance.
- IV. Grant applications & paperwork.
- V. Grant recoupment from Department Quarterly.
- VI. Assisting in setting up group meetings and outreach.

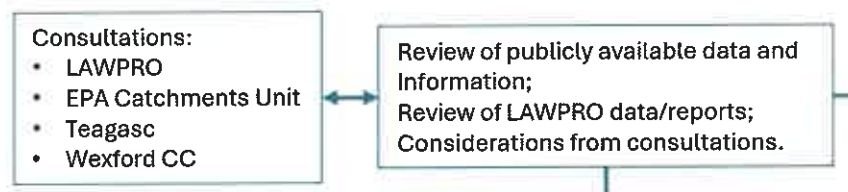
Resource Requirement 3

Water Quality Management Plan Scoping Study to draft a Water Quality Management plan, including a review and assessment of the findings and recommendations included in the 'Lady's Island Lake Water Quality Project Plan: Overview with Recommended Actions (Daly, Sept 2025)'.

This scoping has already commenced with the awarding of a contract to AtkinsRéalis based on consultation with stakeholders and a review of available reports and data, will include recommendations for appropriate future steps and compiling. It is intended that this scoping phase will be finished by the end of 2025.

Resource Requirement 4

Ground Water Scoping Study being substantially completed by end of 2025



Objectives

- To determine the role of groundwater in delivering flux and nutrient loads to the lake.
- To identify and describe potential, suitable mitigation actions which will reduce nutrient loads from groundwater, as applicable, based on identified source-pathway-receptor linkages in the groundwater catchment of the lake.

Approach and Proposed Scope of Work:

This involves background review and consultations with regulators and stakeholders involved in past and present catchment initiatives that are relevant to the hydrogeological assessment. Stakeholders also hold data and information which may be useful but is not in the public domain. Such data will be requested and reviewed, as appropriate.

5. Reporting Structure / Governance

Role	Report to	
Resource 1	Director of Services/Senior Engineer	
Resource 2	Senior Executive Ag Scientist/Project Manager	

Project governance will be through the WFD governance structures and will be guided by the Lady's Island Strategic Oversight Group, and an operational group will also be put in place which will include project partners, of Wexford County Council, LAWPRO, ASSAP, Teagasc, NPWS, Farming for Water EIP and a representative local farmer to ensure efficient liaison and project goals are reached. Monthly updates are to be provided to the members of the Operational Group as well as DHLGH and DAFM.

6. Cost Implications

It has been estimated that the overall cost of the project over a 5-year period will be €705,306, a breakdown of which is included in table 1 above.

7. Benefits

Operational Efficiency

- Employing a Senior Executive Agricultural Scientist/Project Manager who can concentrate on the catchment will ensure the maximum number of farmers in the catchment participate in the project. This was a learning of the Duncannon EIP.
- The employment of an office administrator will allow increased farm time for the project manager thus allowing:
 - increased capacity for on farm measure verification,
 - Increased capacity to support the installation of measures to ensure demonstration areas have a high quality of measure installed,
 - Increased capacity to ensure the right measure in the right place at application stage.

Stakeholder Engagement

- All of the contacted famers expressed interest in the scheme and wanted to know the particular requirements. The farmers wanted to be able to say that they were doing their part for Lady's Island Lake but were also eager that other pollution sources were addressed, not just agriculture.
- As a result of the successes being demonstrated by the farming sector in the Duncannon EIP, other sectors became engaged and got involved in their respective areas and carried out additional works which resulted in improvements in water quality. This multiplier effect resulted in additional improvements above and beyond the individual measures improvements. It is envisaged that this multiplier effect will also be seen in Lady's Island

- By targeting all sectors this leads to increased confidence in the project by the farming community leading to increased application numbers and implementation of measures.
- Uisce Eireann (UE) will be offering its full support to improving the quality of Lady's Island Lake, including working with the steering group being led by Wexford County Council. UE will be establishing its own in-house review and will complete a full in-depth assessment of the agglomeration including expedited improvement works if required. The principal areas to be reviewed will include:
 1. Collection network
 2. Wastewater pumping
 3. Wastewater treatment
 4. Operations and regulatory sampling
 5. SCADA and Call Outs,
 6. Operation and maintenance
 7. Review of survey data

Production of a suit of nutrient reduction measures

- One of the major benefits will be the start of the compilation of a suite of measures which will reduce the sources and transport of nutrients to environmental sensitive receptors, which are scientifically verified as to the quantity of reductions achieved.

8. Recommendation

Lady's Island Action Plan

'Water Action Plan 2024' is Ireland's roadmap to protect and restore our rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwaters. Overarching national policy is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and a key step in delivering on Ireland's obligations under the EU Water Framework Directive.

Crucially, communities are at the heart of the effort and will be empowered to understand the challenges in their area and get involved in solving them through new participation structures. It strategically builds on what we learned from previous plans, and is a combination of short and long-term goals, targets and actions which will work in unison to protect the quality of our water bodies.

This expansion of resources aligns with the commitment in the Programme for Government to increase funding for agri-environmental schemes. We now request funding of **€ 705,306** to finance these resources over the duration of this project, with annual costs as outlined in table 1 above.

This project will complement the "Farming for Water" EIP and other agri-environmental programmes already in place. It aims to showcase the workings of regulatory frameworks, WFD structures, processes and supports in place through Ireland's Water Action Plan and will provide scientific data on the implementation of actions for water quality.

Requested by: Abraham Dunne
Signed: Abraham Dunne
Date: 18/11/25

Recommended by: EAMONN HORE
Signed: Eamonn Hore