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"Endless municipal talk shops while the 'Spit' continues to erode"

St Francis Bay's beach has taken a pounding by gigantic waves during the recent severe storms along the coastline. Many residents have been forced to leave the narrow canals that protect the canals from the sea is in a most precarious and what has been termed "dangerous" state.

Since the ill-fated Damia solution, aka 'the emperor's new clothes' project, placing plastic walls in the sand in order to protect and stopped about four years ago, little has been spent or done by the EC, Province or Kouga municipality to repair St Francis Bay's fast eroding beach and the highly fragile protective barrier for the canals, the dune spit. Home owners have now done thousands to have rock revetments done on the beach fronts in front of their homes to stop their houses falling into the sea. The Canals Riparian committee has done what it could to protect the sand dune, while the SFPD helped SFB beachfront property owners to have rock revetments done by a private company, Kouga Plant and Civils.

Few observers in the know, wish to comment on how drastic the dune situation is as it could upset visitors and other home owners,

particularly those nearest the sea.

A great plan to pump sand onto the beach from the Kromme River was devised a few years ago, but nothing has been done to get up sand. Dredgers on the canals cleared and deepened the canals and the sand was pumped onto the SFI Canal side of the spit side which was acting as a buffer. However, the process was foiled with threats of legal action if implemented.

"It is the municipality's responsibility to be that, and the pumping of sand to

protect the spit came to an abrupt halt in February this year, leaving the spit unprotected and at the mercy of the waves.

During her State of the Municipality address on 28 July, Kouga Mayor, Elizabeth Wesseling, said: "The municipality cannot turn a blind eye to the ongoing beach erosion at St Francis Bay. We are exploring the possibility of reviewing the Working for the Coast business plan so that some of the funding can be redirected to address critical issues such as beach erosion in St Francis Bay and Oyster Bay."

However, some angry and frustrated St Francis Bay residents consider more attention has been given to solving solutions at

Paradise Beach causeway than at St Francis Bay's beach. Both beach areas were inspected by a Kouga councillor following damage to the beach areas after the recent storms, but only at Paradise Beach are there signs of activity and attempts at solving the crisis by municipal officials.

"And Kouga has more to lose if it neglects St Francis Bay's beach. One upset canal resident told me: 'Frankly, Kouga is being negligent if it continues to do nothing.'

"Neglecting the millionaire's playground,

the rates of which boost municipal coffers, is like killing the goose with the golden egg!"

"What is the municipality doing to protect the beach, the spit and canals from further erosion?" another canal homeowner asked, adding that "the municipality holds endless talk shops and committee meetings but no concrete actions have been taken by them." St Francis Chronicle contacted Ben Rhedes and received only two short sentences in reply, namely: "Kouga Municipality is working on a long-term solution to the beach erosion and the repair on rock-revetments are nearly finished. A consultant is busy with a plan for phase two which will address the

spit/dune and our beach."

When asked in response to this reply: Does this mean sand can now be pumped onto the beach? Ben Rhedes replied: "I am not sure if earlier this year?" Rhedes replied in another short phrase: "No official authorisation issued yet."

The SFPD says the current status is that the municipality approved the appointment of engineering firm DEAT to do a feasibility study and design of the long term solution required for the river spit and beach. The price of the winning bid was R1.6million. R1.1million is for the completion of the design phase (Phase 2A), and R0.5million is for their oversight of the construction phase (Phase 2B).

Phase 2A includes engineering design and the EIA submission to ODEDET. It is expected to take 12-18 months to get DEAT's approval for the Construction phase (Phase 2B).

The SFPD is currently using donated funds from home owners and residents of St Francis Bay to repair the beach. However, it will need a proposed SRA levy to be approved and implemented in July 2018 to finance Phase 2B, see photos, of Spit, p2.

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