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Exclusive Instruction

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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 in the recent severe storms along the coastline. Many metres of sand were lost and the situation of the narrow dune spit which protects the canals from the sea is in a most precarious and what has been termed 'dangerous' state.

Since the ill-fated Danish solution, aka 'the emperor's no clothes' project, of placing plastic white pipes in the beach to trap sand, was 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 themselves have donated 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 SFFO 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 back and was instrumental in building up sand. Dredgers on the canals cleared and deepened the canals and the sand was pumped onto the Ski Canal side of the spit side which was acting as a buffer. However, this process was forbidden with threats of astronomical fines if transgressed, by the powers that be, 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 (SOMA) a year ago, Kouga's Executive Mayor, Elza van Lingen, 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 coastal needs in St Francis Bay, Cape St Francis 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 caused at both areas during 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 St Francis Chronicle. "Neglecting this millinaire's playground, the rates of which boost municipal coffers, is like killing the goose with the golden eggs!"

"What is the municipality doing to protect the beach, the spit and canals from further damage?" another canal home owner 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 Riederer and received only two short sentences in reply, namely: "Kouga Municipality is working together with the SFFO residents association 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 again after this practice was stopped earlier this year? Riederer replied in another short phrase: "No official authorisation issued yet."

The SFFO says the current status is that the municipality approved the appointment of Worley Parsons to complete the selection and design of the long term solution required for the river, spit and beach. The price of the winning bid was R1.5million. R1.5million 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 DEAT. It is expected to take 12-18 months to get DEAT's approval for the Construction phase (Phase 2B).

The SFFO is currently using donated funds from home owners and residents of St Francis Bay to pay for Phase 2A. However, it will need its proposed SRA levy to be approved and implemented in July 2018 to finance Phase 2B. See photos, of Spil, p2.

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