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The precarious Spit protecting the canals can now be fixed

The St Francis Property Owners (SFPO) association has been given approval by the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEAT) to fix the endangered Dune Spit which is the only physical protection from the sea for St Francis' pristine Blue Flag canals.

This comes after decades of pleadings by the town fathers for repair work to be done on the Spit to keep the canals safe. Though DEAT was willing to grant permission, funds were not always available and since the last funding for beach repair work by the previous Kouga municipal government bore no fruit, provincial and municipal authorities have been highly reluctant to provide additional funds for repair of the Spit.

The Spit currently has extremely little left of its protective Dune and will breach in the next few months, so the announcement on

the 2 February this month that it can be repaired has been greatly welcomed. The last substantial Kouga government beach repair work involved the Danish plastic pipe solution to trap beach sand, which was widely used on Denmark's beaches. This was later revealed to be a hoax by the Danish government, which stopped using it on its beaches, as did Kouga Municipality. The Danish press had a field day, likening the system to 'the Emperor's No Clothes'.

The SFPO says it and the current municipal government recently made an urgent application to DEAT to start emergency, immediate remedial work on the Spit, along with the rebuilding of the Dune on the Spit. The rebuilding of this precarious dune is a necessary first step before any form of protection, including a revetment, is possible.

The dune needs to be rebuilt (some 30

metres in width) to support a revetment, the SFPO says. However, the long term solution is to move sufficient sand onto the entire length of the beach to push back the sea 40 metres and use a groyne field to hold the sand on the beach.

Revelments along the beach and Spit will then fulfil their intended purpose, which is to provide a last line of defence against significant sea surges and storms."

The SFPO says it hired Advisian to design the long term solution for the restoration of the Kromme River, The Spit and the Beach. Advisian will present their final report at the end of February. The SFPO hopes that more than half St Francis home owners in the Canal and Village areas of St Francis Bay, will vote in favour of the SRA levy which is proposed to raise funds for the beach and Spit repair among other needed

infrastructure in the town (see p4).

The SFPO also says Municipal Manager, Charl du Plessis, and environmental consultant, Frank Silberman, have been proactive in getting the approval from DEAT. "We will start by rebuilding the dune using the Riparian dredgers.

The SFPO revealed that it has met with the municipality's infrastructure leadership team. To agree on responsibilities and resources that the municipality, the St Francis Bay canals' Home Owners Association and the SFPO can provide to move quickly in order to save the Spit, which has taken further bed erosion in recent storms.

The current municipality, which is spending money on Jeffreys Bay's Blue Flag beach, is investigating eliciting Government funding for repairing the Spit.

By Bev Martine

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