

# Wealthy 'messing up our beach'

The construction of palatial homes in Gordon's Bay, Cape Town, has caused such severe erosion that the beach has become unsafe.

On one stretch of the public beach, debris from construction sites and illegally built perimeter walls continues to wash into the sea, which is reclaiming the beach.

According to Pedro da Paixao, chairman of the homeowners' association for Nagua Bay, Cayman Beach and the Antilles complex, some of the owners of the luxury houses who have built walls on public land have refused to remove them and have turned a blind eye to the damage to the beach.

The City of Cape Town was aware of the problem but had failed to act, said Da Paixao.

"The walls are illegal, no permission was granted [for their construction. The council should have put protective measures in place. The beach is crumbling to bits and no one is taking responsibility," Da Paixao said.

He said the city's district council met some of the homeowners in October but the situation did not change.

"They said either we should leave or get an environmental impact assessment.

"The study costs R400,000, which must be borne by the owners because the council has money troubles.

"The homeowners don't have that kind of money. Something must be done to force someone to do something," he said.

The association had approached the wealthy home owners who had "basically admitted responsibility" but were "too arrogant" to get involved because they did not live in South Africa and seldom used the homes.

Another house was under construction, with high metal walls extending further onto the beach.

Belinda Alderman, a member of the Cape Town mayoral committee for economic, environmental and spatial planning, said "erosion of this nature" was not unique to the particular stretch of beach but occurred throughout the Cape coastline.

"The potential does exist for multiple elements - both natural and artificial - to act together, which might result in or exacerbate erosion," said Alderman.

Regarding the specific stretch of beach, Alderman said the city was dealing with the concerns of the residents.

"The first relates to the house that is currently being built and which has resulted in the manipulation of the ground level [elevating] on the beach side of the property.

"As this activity did not form part of the conditions identified in the building plans determined in 2010, a 'stop works' [order] has been issued."

She said the owner would be required to rectify the situation and rehabilitate the area affected.

But Da Paixao said construction of the luxury home was continuing because the council had given the go-ahead.

Regarding the collapsing grass embankment - which has resulted in protruding steel wires, exposed irrigation pipes and crumbling cement blocks - Alderman said the wall had been constructed "many years ago" to protect owners from storm surges.

"The city has requested that the areas that have been damaged be made safe and that, for the longer-term planning, a specialist study be undertaken to determine the most appropriate rehabilitation and/or upgrading for this revetment," said Alderman.

Source: *The Times* via I-Net Bridge

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>