

MINISTER ISSUES DEMOLITION LIST

Hundreds of properties face the wrecking ball reports Glenn Wickman Costa Almeria News, November 9-15, 2007

THE Spanish government has issued a draft plan effectively announcing the planned demolition of hundreds of coastline properties throughout the country

The so-called Strategy for the Sustainability of the Coast, published by the department led by Cristina Narbona in collaboration with the University of Cantabria, took two years to compile and is now awaiting debate and approval by the autonomous governments of Spain's 17 regions.

Although the final document has not yet been made public, various extracts have been leaked and a preliminary draft is available.

The large and comprehensive dossier identifies areas where the eco-system is at risk from development, and highlights the dangers of living by coastlines threatened by erosion as a result of global warming.

More controversially, it aims to enforce compliance with the newly established 300-metre shoreline protection zone, which would entail the obligatory payment of large sums of compensation by the Spanish government to the owners of many properties rendered illegal by the law.

In the most extreme cases, the introduction of the bill could require "a new model of economic development in certain areas of the coast", according to the preliminary draft.

The report claims that the coasts of Almería and Granada are the least damaged by over-construction in Spain, while at the same time being the most endangered.

The report says: "The current industrial development taking place in certain areas is causing the rapid deterioration of the coastline and which, in many cases, is irreversible or difficult to remedy."

In Almería province, the tourist development model of the entire Cabo de Gata nature park has come under fire from the report, criticising the scenic and environmental degradation of the 75-kilometre coastline, as well as the lack of thorough town planning and over-exploitation of natural resources.

More specifically, the plan suggests the removal and relocation of the DSM Deretil antibiotics factory in Villaricos and the Holcim cement plant in Carboneras, as well as the demolition of La Parra and Veraplaya hotels in Aguadulce and Vera respectively, among others

The announcement has been received with shock and outrage by business owners, who believe the plans are unrealistic and unworkable.

The Algarrobicos hotel in Carboneras was used by Sra Narbona as an example of the type of 'expropriation and demolition' foreseen in the dossier, and Antonio Baena, spokesman for Azata del Sol, the company in charge of the hotel, dismissed the plans as "nonsense".

However, a government spokesman insisted that the dossier is not a definite plan to be enforced with immediate action. Alejandro Molins, from the environment ministry, told Costa Almería News: "We have presented the draft to the council of ministers and to the various regional governments, and are currently waiting to hear their opinions so that we can work on a consensus.

"It doesn't mean that the bulldozers are already lining up to tear down properties."

