

■ MUNICIPAL

# Complaints of RDP houses collapsing

*Residents blame shoddy workmanship, poor planning for their homes being compromised after the recent storms*

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AN OVERSIGHT visit to an RDP housing project near Port Shepstone has revealed that the KwaZulu-Natal south coast development is on the brink of collapse after heavy rains battered the region earlier this month.

Martin Meyer, the DA KZN spokesperson on Human Settlements, along with councillor Ajith Rajaram, visited the Merlewood development in Ray Nkonyeni Municipality last week, following calls for help from residents.

Meyer described the situation at the development as dire, adding that sandbanks behind some houses have started to collapse, while foundations appeared to have caused the homes to move.

"Some residents have decided to build their own retaining walls to try to save their properties, but many of these have already collapsed," said Meyer.

Resident Mervin King said the residents feared that one of the houses would collapse on someone.

"The land is not suitable for houses to be built on," King said.

He said taps, door handles and showers were falling apart.

"Other concerns raised by residents are the lack of electricity, gravel roads and stormwater drainage."

Another resident, Peter Goldsmith, said his house had started to collapse and a sandbank had fallen into his property.

"My house started falling apart during the April floods. I'm still owing the bank the R25 000 I borrowed to rebuild the collapsed house," said Goldsmith.

Meyer said an 89-year-old grandmother, whose house was under threat from a shifting sandbank, had been stuck inside her home for two days.

He said poor building practices caused her door to get stuck due to the rain.

The DA said poor planning, shoddy building and the non-compliance, with basic engineering practices, had



A SANDBANK has collapsed against a Merlewood RDP house. INSET: The ground under a Merlewood RDP house has washed away after last week's heavy rains.

resulted in severe damage to a large number of RDP houses in the province during last week's and previous storms.

"The Merlewood housing project has clearly failed to meet minimum standards of safety," said Meyer.

Meyer said the DA had asked the KZN Human Settlement's head, Mdu Zungu, to intervene and for urgent steps to be taken to improve the lives of residents.

Mbulelo Baloyi, the spokesperson for the Department of Human Settlements and Public Works, said they would be liaising with the Ray Nkonyeni Municipality.

He said, in all housing projects, the municipality played the role of the developer because it made land available, on which the RDP houses were built.

Baloyi said a triple inspection

had been done by inspectors from the quality assurer National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC), the department's inspectors, as well as the building inspectorate of the municipality.

"In the event of such complaints, the municipality has to invite NHBRC to come and conduct conditional technical assessments on the complaints about such poor workmanship, before

any rectification work could be done," he said.

Baloyi said all the department's housing projects had to comply with the NHBRC.

Simon April, Ray Nkonyeni Municipality spokesperson, said arrangements would be made to meet the Merlewood RDP Housing Development Committee to discuss the issues.