

Environmental damage on the boundary of Middelvlei

The boundary fence extending from Middelvlei boundary across Public Works land is going to be removed. Timing is critical to get this done as soon as possible before the rise in the estuary, floods this area. Investigation of the fence extension revealed that this was just a small part of the recent environmental damage in the area.

The illegal erection of this fence (140 metres) across a wetland is also an environmental crime. Much debate about whether the high water mark is, from the open estuary with little water or from the water level typical of the closed estuary is of little consequence to this issue. The fence was erected across a wetland, obviously with no environmental impact assessment. The vehicle traffic, holes dug into the wetland and the long term barrier the fence poses, both in its erection and demolition, has and will caused environmental harm. This should certainly trigger an environmental investigation.

Secondly, along the legitimate boundary fence of Middelvlei (from the illegal fence point up to the entrance gate and across from the gate extending all the way to the south east corner) a digger loader has been used recently to clear a strip averaging at least 5m wide of all vegetation, both inside and outside the fence. In this extremely sensitive area of blowing sand dunes with very little cover anyway, this is extremely damaging to the environment. In addition, on the south side of the gate, tons of rubble has been spread and "covered" with sand.

On the track, within 100m of the entrance gate, rubble including other rubbish such as plastics has been dumped from Middelvlei in an attempt to close the track. This should also trigger an environmental investigation.

Middelvlei was sold on the basis that they have green areas to compensate for the estuary edge buildings. Some of this damage is within their property (so-called green areas) and the rest is on Government land adjoining Middelvlei. The extreme fire hazard risk from the adjoining properties, is acknowledged, but the methods which have been used to mitigate this are breaking a number of environmental laws. An investigation of the scale of the damage should be done, directives issued and compensation made to the general public for what has been an ongoing issue, especially in the last few years.

Further down the track, through Public Works land, and in areas adjoining the track, especially in the Paddavlei River wetland area, rubbish has also been tipped. This is unlikely to come from Middelvlei and inquiries have revealed that this comes from Hawston. The extensive dumping of rubbish and rubble in the immediate township area of Hawston, including into wetland areas, needs to be dealt with as well. Rubbish and rubble is also now being dumped onto other public and private land surrounding Hawston.

BREF needs to trigger an investigation of environmental damage in and around Middelvlei.