

Mayor objects to

Anneke du Toit

"IT doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that the noise will not chase the flamingoes away," said Mr Patrick Lenyibi, executive mayor of the Sol Plaatje Municipality in Kimberley.

The mayor called a press conference "to put to rest once and for all the matter of the flamingoes".

This comes after a website to save the flamingoes was launched. Lenyibi was also cornered by an investigative journalist from *Carte Blanche*, Bonita Nuttall, about the fact that raw sewage is being pumped into the Kamfers Dam. The biggest permanent population of lesser flamingoes in South Africa live here.

It is also feared that the proposed R2 billion Northgate development by Group 1 may threaten the flamingoes. This development is set to take place between Roodepan and the Kamfers Dam.

Lenyibi denied that solid waste is being pumped into the Kamfers Dam. He said that he visits the plant every Friday to check on the water level of the dam and to see that solid waste does not leave the plant.

"There is no threat to the flamingoes or the railway line."

This is despite the fact that various interest groups have been conducting visits to the plant on various occasions, finding that the plant is not only running at full capacity, but that the solid waste is not being treated as it should be before leaving the plant.

"You (members of the media) are welcome to go into the Kamfers Dam and check for yourself. If you can find solid waste, you can show it to the people," said Lenyibi.

In the Kamfers Dam 5% of the flamingoes have lesions on their legs. This may be caused by the deteriorating water quality. When asked about this, Lenyibi replied that if his dog had a swollen leg it is his responsibility to take it to the vet. He said there are professionals who can see to the flamingoes.

According to Lenyibi the Homevale Sewage Works has a capacity of 30 megalitres a day. The fact that 40 megalitres come in every day is not a problem as there are extra holding pens.

When asked when this ever increasing amount of waste is being processed, seeing

as the plant runs at full capacity every day, the mayor could not give a clear answer.

He said a consultant has been appointed to conduct a study with the aim of upgrading the plant to a 45 megalitre-a-day facility. "Nobody can rush or compel us to see to the plant. We will do it in our own time."

Lenyibi then lambasted the objectors by claiming that they are racists and that the environmental groups can "go to hell".

"This fight is racially motivated," Lenyibi said. "If it was a white business wanting to put up a development, nobody would have said a word."

After being asked about the CEO of Group 1, who happens to be white, Lenyibi insisted that it is still a racist movement.

"When the mall was being planned in a residential area, nobody complained. When the new prison and mental hospital was coming, nobody objected," Lenyibi said, after which members of the media reminded the mayor that there were no flamingoes under threat in those particular developments.

Lenyibi said that if noise was going to chase the flamingoes away, they would have left by now. "The train roars past seven or eight times a day and the birds are still there. The boundary wall of the development will be 1 km away from the Kamfers Dam."

Members of the media reminded Lenyibi that the perimeter wall of Northgate may be 1 km from the breeding island, but less than 300 m from the edge of the water. The trains on the rail near Kamfersdam also have a speed limit due to the water content of the ground surrounding the area.

"Why were the public hearings only held in white areas, why were there not public hearings held in Galeshewe or Roodepan?"

Noordkaap had earlier reported about the public meetings, and residents from Galeshewe and Roodepan had attended, raising their points of view on the matter.

During the press conference the mayor refused to answer any "what if" questions, saying he does not respond to speculations.

"Nobody brought the flamingoes here, they came by themselves and if they want to leave, we can't stop them."