

Dear Members, Dear Friends,

Two episodes of the “Último Filão”, a TV program of SIC’s Jornal da Noite, on the 29th and 30th November 2021 exposed what many have known for several years: that the best preserved coastline of Portugal is about to be transformed into a vast tourist resort.

Along the 62 km, between Troia and Melides, an additional 35,000 beds in real-estate developments have been licensed or pre-licensed. Four additional golf courses are expected, of which two have been completed (Pinheirinho and Comporta Dunes) and two others are under construction (Comporta Torre and Costa Terra).

“I only know of one golf course in the Comporta área” is António Ceia da Silva’s statement, he is the chair of the CCDR Alentejo – the Alentejo regional coordination and development commission. In the same program we heard Luis Gamboa, Operations Director of VIC Properties, owner of the Herdade do Pinheirinho, say that **“the Troia golf course is not sufficient for golfers... players want variety, today someone wants to play here, tomorrow at the course next door”**.

The Discovery Land Company, an American luxury resort development company, boasts of the rights that came with the Costa Terra acquisition and that permit a golf course within 500 meters from the beach (when this normally requires to be > 2Km). In an interview to the Vanguard Law Magazine (8th January 2020), Jeffrey Holland, general counsel, comments in connection with zoning laws: **“All in all, just pure due diligence is required...What’s been done here before? Is any area untouchable for environmental reasons? It can be a pretty straightforward process once you hire the best land use and acquisition attorneys in the jurisdiction.”**

On September 9th 2021, the regional newspaper O Setubalense held a debate between the candidates of CDU, PS and PSD for the municipal elections in Grândola. The outgoing mayor, António Figueira Mendes, pointed out that in 1964 along the coast-line of the municipality 120,000 beds were planned. In 1981, in the Plano Integrado da Faixa Costeira de Grândola, this number was reduced to 54,000. It was later further reduced to 35,000, then 24,000 and now only a total of 15,000 beds are permitted. **“There is no more space for further developments, unless you go inland”**, stated the Mayor, concerned with the “tremendous real-estate speculation” in the Grândola municipality.

António Candeias, the PS candidate, alerted to the likelihood that those that live in Grândola will cease to benefit from access to the coast. **“Every time a tourist development kicks off, we get the sense that they want the beach to be within their jurisdiction.”** The then socialist candidate asked for the community’s interest to be defended, claiming free access to the beaches of the

municipality **“for those that live as well as those that come to enjoy the beaches of the Grândola coastline”** (in Idealista, 07 October 2021).

It was about time that **PROTEGER GRÂNDOLA – Associação de Defesa do Ambiente** was founded. This is a civil society movement concerned with the unbridled real estate and touristic development that is neither sensible nor respectful of environment concerns or of the people that make this land their home.

“For a good example of poor urban planning, poor management of land development, poor use of the natural heritage, and poor performance of civil society in the defense of its own interests we already have the Algarve. Here in the Concelho de Grândola we have the duty to learn from the mistakes committed elsewhere in the country, and do better” - Guy Villax, founding member.

When we witness the most senior officer of the authorities responsible for planning claiming ignorance about excess construction – such as golf courses in areas where water resources do not even support the needs of its people and its agriculture – there is no alternative but for us to get together to influence the decision-making process and make sure the people of Grândola get a seat at the table and are not forgotten.

Our purpose is not to fight against economic development, but rather to ensure that such development is aligned with a long-term vision that considers all stakeholders of the region and that the profits of the real-estate speculation are not inflated by making sure externalities are for the account of the tax-payer or drive losses to the neighbours.

We thank all those that have applied for membership and have paid their 2021/22 fees. We look forward to seeing you at the General Meeting next month.

Best wishes for the New Year.

The Proteger Grândola Team.

Please find the original sources of the quotes in <https://protegergrandola.org/noticias/>

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The beginning

This project kicked off when a dozen people who are committed to the protection of the hills and the coast of Grândola got together. After several meetings during the Summer of 2021 we incorporated Proteger Grândola – Associação de Proteção do Ambiente on the 31st August.

In this start-up phase five founding members are driving the Association:

Guy Villax – a company executive with over 30 years in the pharma industry and with leadership roles in trade associations namely in the fight against fake medicines. Past-trustee of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa and current chair of the Health Cluster Portugal.

Agostinho Miranda – Lawyer, university faculty member, author and translator. In the last four decades has had a role defending the public's interest in matters of human and environmental rights, namely in leadership roles in LPN - Liga para a Proteção da Natureza. Agostinho is chair of ProPública, and of the associations Sintra and Amigos dos Escoteiros de Sintra.

Rita Nunes – A trained business executive with 16 years' experience in the finance area of multinationals. Melides is her second home since 2001.

Christina Villax – A trained business executive, worked as an investment banker. Of German origin, Christina lives in Portugal for 25 years and has a property in the Serra where she has invested herself in reforestation.

Jorge Revez – Has a first degree in sociology, a PhD in Tourism and is a university faculty member, Jorge has a long experience in the fields of environment and sustainable land development. Active in civil society organizations connected with heritage, environment, culture and regional development. Jorge was responsible for the creation of the Parque Natural do Vale do Guadiana.

Priority objectives of the Association

- To assure that people continue to have unhindered and unrestricted access to the beaches they have always enjoyed;
- To ensure that any real-estate development meets reasonable criteria and is sustainable.
- Study the matter of water availability by tracking the demonstrated water availability with the planned consumptions of the licensed developments.

We also wish to collect and make available documentation that describe best-practices in different fields so that everyone can make the most of the land while minimizing his or her impact on it.

To turn Proteger Grândola into an impactful actor we need your help !

- Visit our site www.protegergrandola.org where you will find additional information on our activities and relevant news about the regions.
- Apply for membership:
Individual membership annual fee: €25/year
<https://protegergrandola.org/apoiar/#associado>
Comany or association membership: please enquire and justify your application by email to info@protegergrandola.org
- If you are available to help as a volunteer please contact us how at info@protegergrandola.org

Our first General Meeting shall take in February 2022. We shall elect the members that will fill the positions of the governing bodies of the Association. Please email us advising whether you are interested in taking up a role in any of the governing bodies that are out for election, or to do work as a volunteer.

At that meeting we shall report the work done to date, we will present our plans and budget for 2022. It will be the right time for a collective debate on the direction of the Association.

Apply for membership so you have a right to vote and have a voice at the General Meeting !

The Association's income comes from the annual membership fee set at €25/year and any donations from its members. This income will be used to cover expenses related to the website maintenance, book-keeping, and legal and other related fees that are incurred when we require specialized work. Volunteers assure the operation of the Association.