

## Wake-Up Call for Brits

Town plans will not legalise expat homes reports Richard Torne Costa Almeria News, November 9-15, 2007

The vice-president of an expat association leading the fight to save thousands of expat homes from demolition in the Almanzora valley said this week that the town plans in Albox would not solve the crisis of illegal buildings.

Bob Preston from the AUAN went further, and said that only the Junta's own sub regional plans would provide a long-lasting solution - but warned that it could take years for this to happen.

Mr Preston made the comments after attending last month's symposium on urban development, which was attended by Junta officials and top local businessmen.

He said: "We've been warning expats for a long time that the town plans (the PGOU) would not solve the problem of illegal buildings - but many are still under the impression that it will".

At the two-day conference, the regional government's Chief of Urban Development, Maria Felicidad Montero, dropped a bombshell by saying that only the Junta's own sub-regional plans would solve the crisis.

She also downplayed the importance of the PGOU in Albox, which up to now had been seen as an essential document for legalising properties.

Mr Preston said the realisation would be a timely wake-up call for Brits, many of whom, he added, had been lulled into a false sense of security over the future of their properties.

Despite the glum news, Mr Preston said it was a positive step towards establishing order in Albox. He said: "The sub-regional plan is the only way to do it, because the PGOU is very limited by law".

In an unprecedented move, the Mayor of Albox, Jose Garcia Navarro, agreed to speak about the crisis to expats at a meeting of the AUAN being held today (Friday November 9) at the Garcia Ramos school.

Speaking to Costa Almeria News, Sr Navarro said: "The future for most of the properties will depend on the sub-regional plans, as the PGOU will only determine the legality of a very small number of homes".

He also dismissed a speedy resolution to the crisis, adding that it would "take years" - a bleak prospect for expats hoping to sell their properties.

"There's nothing we can do about that and I'm not here to trick people into believing there is a quick-fix solution" concluded Sr Navarro.