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Hemsby Man Takes Coastal Erosion Battle to European Court of Human Rights

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A Norfolk resident whose seaside home was lost to coastal erosion has vowed to continue his fight for accountability, taking his claim to Europe after failing to secure relief in the UK courts.

Kevin Jordan, whose property in Hemsby was demolished in December 2023, has complained to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). He contends that successive

governments have fallen short of their duty to protect communities from the growing threat of erosion and other climate-related impacts.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council ordered Mr Jordan's home on the Marrams to be demolished, citing an imminent risk that it would collapse into the sea. In the months that followed, he became a campaigner, determined to prevent other households facing similar losses without sufficient support or planning.

Teaming up with disability rights advocate Doug Paulley and Friends of the Earth, Mr Jordan challenged the National Adaptation Programme (NAP) developed under the former Conservative government. The NAP was intended to set out measures to address climate risks, but the group argued it was inadequate and failed to properly address dozens of threats linked to climate change.

Their case was heard in the High Court earlier this year but ultimately dismissed, with the judges ruling that the government's approach remained within its legal discretion.

Not deterred by the setback, the campaigners have now escalated the matter to the ECHR in Strasbourg. They argue that the UK's climate adaptation strategy breaches their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights by failing to offer sufficient protection to those on the frontline of environmental change.

There are homes all across the country that are at risk due to the effects of climate change. To deal with these issues, the government must have an adaptation plan that is fit for purpose. Unfortunately, the government's plan in its current format is not up to scratch. After the disappointment of seeing our claim turned away in the UK courts, we now look ahead to making our case with the European Court of Human Rights."

The claimants, represented by solicitor Rowan Smith of Leigh Day, maintain that the Climate Change Act 2008 requires a robust adaptation programme with clear, measurable objectives that genuinely address the scale of the crisis. They also argue that those already living with the consequences of erosion and extreme weather are being disproportionately affected by the government's shortcomings.

While the outcome of the European complaint remains to be seen, the case is likely to intensify scrutiny of official efforts to respond to climate-related hazards along England's coast. Many residents feel they have been left to fend for themselves in the face of

worsening conditions, and there is little confidence that further delays will bring the decisive action communities urgently require.