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## Spanish town goes on strike over development

**Dale Fuchs in Madrid**  
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An entire town on Spain's cement-clogged Costa del Sol went on strike for a day to protest at the planned construction of two golf courses, 800 luxury homes and two hotels.

The 1,853 residents of Cuevas del Becerro, outside Malaga, closed shops, bars, the town's only petrol station and even the elementary school this week, part of a mounting popular backlash against rampant building throughout the country.

Residents fear the development, by Promociones Club de Campo y Golf de Ronda, will usurp, and possibly taint, the town water supply. More than 600 parents and children marched with signs that read "Water is our best friend" and "Speculation threatens the aquifer".

Until recently, criticism of the building blitz in Spain was confined to environmentalists or foreign second-home owners whose rustic estates were encircled by concrete. Local populations have traditionally remained silent at the onslaught of golf courses and holiday villas because new development brings jobs.

"What happens is the developers go from house to house offering positions tending the gardens or language courses and training to the young people, and everyone can taste the honey in their mouths," Juan Becerra, deputy mayor of Cuevas del Becerro, told the Guardian.

But a series of severe droughts has raised awareness of the water shortage in the parched south and a rash of real estate corruption scandals, such as the one that put the mayor of Marbella, Marisol Yague, in jail, have galvanised public outrage.

"We have to take the initiative," said Juan Antonia Garcia, a 43-year-old beekeeper in Cuevas del Becerro and a farmers' union leader. "Marbella wouldn't be the way it is if the people had reacted sooner. You can't wait for the judges to come clean up."

Days before the town strike, Mr Garcia said the developer had handed out leaflets offering jobs at the golf course. "We can not be bought," he said. "We will not surrender."

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